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ABSTRACT

This booklet attempts to illustrate how students and graduates who are deaf or who have hearing impairments incorporate emerging technology into their lives to make a difference in their communities. Although the students' missions vary, technology is clearly a valuable and dynamic part of many of these students' lives. The text begins with the story, "The Impact of Emerging Technology: A Deaf Experience" (Don Ashmore), which highlights how technology advances can positively change the lives of people with hearing impairments. Following this introduction, student profiles are provided in the following categories: (1) students making a difference through technology; (2) students making a difference through cultural diversity; (3) students making a difference through education, which highlights students who are studying to become teachers; (4) students making a difference through holistic professions; and (5) students making a difference through children and youth. The profiles discuss the goals of the students, the challenges they have had to face, assistive devices that have helped them, and their successes. A list of PEC (Postsecondary Educational Consortium) state outreach and technical assistance centers is provided. (CR)

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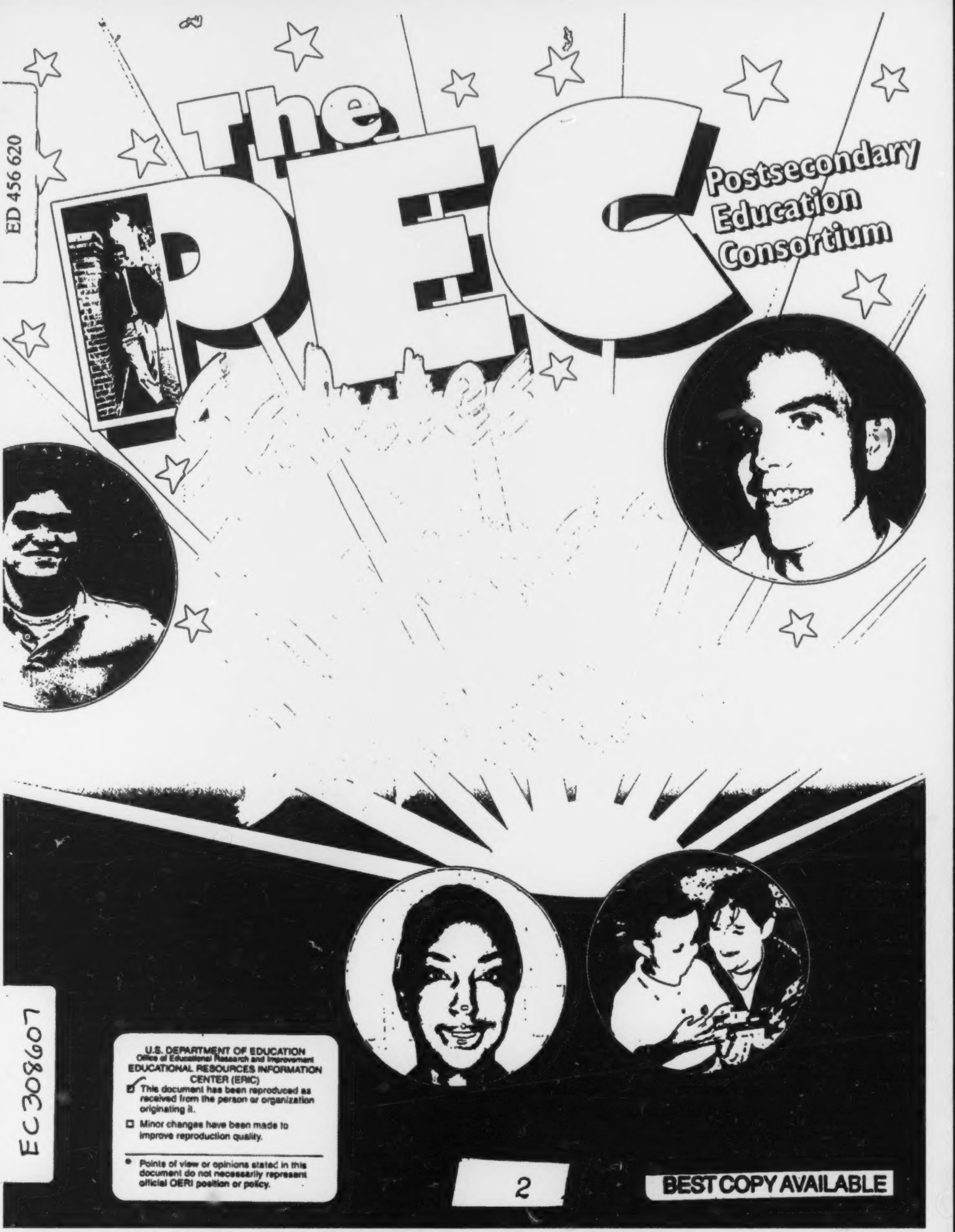

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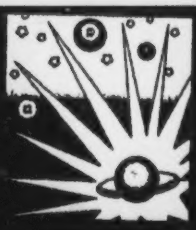

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This edition of *The PEC Salutes...* attempts to illustrate how students and graduates incorporate emerging technology into their lives to make a difference in their communities. As the stories were compiled for this publication, it became evident that the students were branching into every conceivable vocation as do their hearing peers. For this reason, the organization of this edition is shaped by their missions in life.

Although their missions vary, as demonstrated by the table of contents below, technology is clearly a valuable and dynamic part of many of these students' lives. As you read their stories, you will see that—for even some students not immersed in a technological field of study—emerging technology plays a part in enabling them to make such a positive difference in the lives of those around them.

We hope you enjoy reading about these students who serve as important role models for younger deaf and hard of hearing students.

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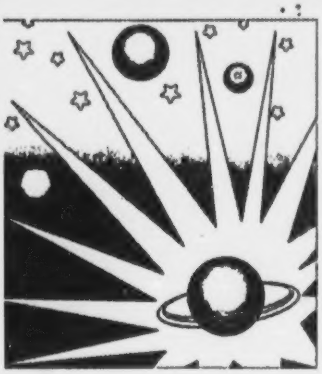

The Impact of Emerging Technology: A Deaf Experience

Don Ashmore,
Associate Professor and Director of the Center on Deafness
The University of Tennessee

I was looking for a miracle. The sign in the big glass window was talking to me. It shouted at my eyes: "Wake up and smell the coffee." Although the necessary pieces were not assembled yet, intuitively it was obvious that this device was the key to the miracle.

As a thirteen-year old, my heart was fixed on taking over a morning paper route. The paperboy was graduating from high school and was quitting the route in a few days. The application required a parent's signature. Mom deferred the authority—and the decision—to Dad.

Dad's facial expression told me what I already knew. He was weary from making countless trips to wake me up at 6:30 a.m. every morning for school. How was I going to wake up at 3 a.m.? Under the circumstances, I feared the worst. He was going to muster the courage and the tact to say "No." However, he did not. The suspense was making my hands sweat. Finally, Dad took a deep breath and searched for the right words. His lips began to form his response: "If you want this paper route, then you need to learn how to wake up on time on your own."

I jumped on the bus and headed to downtown Seattle. I had no particular destination in mind. It just seemed like it was the right thing to do to begin my search for this mysterious miracle.

After reading the sign, I stepped into an appliance store. The device on display was a dead ringer for an alarm clock. A timer occupied the space normally housing the alarm components. One could plug in any electrically operated device and, in turn, this clock would turn on and shut off the electricity that would power the device at predestinated times. After burning out Dad's expensive photo lamps, my electric shaver became my faithful "alarm clock" until I got married about ten years later.

It required another decade before teletypewriters for the deaf (TTYs) hit the "underground" market. Deaf technicians installed an acoustic coupler modified for Baudot (invented by Robert Weitbrecht, a deaf scientist) into discarded Western Union teletypewriters and distributed them on a limited basis to deaf consumers and interpreters. TTYs provided telephone access for individuals with special hearing, speech, and language needs. A few years later a captioned decoder enabled television to become intelligible via closed captioning for individuals with hearing impairments. These two magnificent technological advances allowed deaf people to gain a sense of autonomy, independence and self-reliance. Today, some thirty years later, *both* hearing and deaf people use e-mail and Internet technology as a major mode for communication access and information.

Emerging technology has been an exciting ride for me. Some of the stories you will read throughout these pages confirm that it still is exciting, perhaps more so. You will see as you read further that many of the students are grateful for the technologies available to them today. You will also see how it plays a role for many of them in enabling them to make a difference in our communities of today. The Postsecondary Education Consortium is indeed grateful for the students, graduates and employees who use and benefit from the amazing technologies of today; those who make emerging technology possible and meaningful; and parents—like my father— who challenge us to find answers to our unique needs.

①

Students Making a Difference Through Technology

Jerome Ethan Artis

Jerome Ethan Artis, who prefers to be called Ethan, was born prematurely. He has learned many lessons in his life, especially as a college student. "Life can be so devastating when people don't do what they are supposed to do," he shares. "People have to constantly strive everyday to make things right in their lives."

Throughout his childhood, Ethan attended public elementary and middle schools and also attended the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf for a short period of about three years. In the tenth grade he was transferred to the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) in Washington, D.C. "for a better educational program," he says. "I was a student at MSSD for three years. I had a lot of independence and a lot of fun there."

Ethan was proud to be accepted to the **National Technical Institute for the Deaf** (NTID) after graduation. He studied Applied Computer Technology as a full-time student. "The reason I chose Applied Computer Technology as my field of study is that it involves a lot of 'hands-on' work, and I like to work with machines. I am good with my hands." Ethan was also pleased to be at a school with other deaf students. "At NTID," he says, "I could get help any time of the day. My grades fell, however, because I slept late, missed classes, and chose to be with friends rather than doing homework first. I didn't do what I was supposed to do, and I had to leave NTID. I was devastated when I had to go home."

Ethan has a second chance, though. He is now a part-time student at **Georgia Perimeter College** (GPC). "I am now taking a 'Reasonable Accommodation' class to help improve my reading and writing skills and help prepare me to become a better student an NTID." Ethan is enjoying Georgia Perimeter College and particularly appreciates this class that teaches deaf and hard of hearing students the basic foundations of reading and writing English. "This is very important for everyday life and also in the business world," he says.

> "No matter how devastated you may feel, always try to make the best of your life, even though it is hard."

Ethan plans to return to NTID soon. "I came to GPC after one year at NTID, because I need to improve my GPA and my study habits before I return to NTID," he admits.

One of Ethan's passions is wrestling. He was on the wrestling team at MSSD for a year. He also enjoys weightlifting, rollerblading, fixing electronic devices, surfing on the Internet, reading, Shakespeare, and poetry.

"My advice for anybody who wants to attend college or do anything in life is this: No matter how devastated you may feel, always try to make the best of your life, even though it is hard. All people should strive everyday to be in control of their lives. You can't always do what you want to do; you have to do what you need to do to stay stable. It is easy to let go and let life slip through your fingers. College students need to stay focused and look to the future to get the life they wish for and dream of."

Bridget Bondurant

Bridget Bondurant grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia. She became deaf at the age of two due to complications related to spinal meningitis. Mainstreamed at R.S. Payne Elementary School, Bridget did not have a sign language interpreter until the fourth grade. In the middle of her fourth grade year, Bridget transferred to a program for deaf and hard of hearing students at Lynchburg Christian Academy (LCA). "The other deaf students attending LCA were either much older or much younger than I was," Bridget explains, "and I preferred to be in classes with students my own age, so by the seventh and eighth grades, I was attending fully mainstreamed classes with hearing students. In ninth grade, I transferred back to the local public school system and attended Jefferson Forest High School." Bridget graduated from Jefferson Forest in 1994.

Bridget attended **Shenandoah University** for two years but left because of a lack of services for deaf and hard of hearing students. "I was their first deaf student," she says. **New River Community College** was her next stop; there she enjoyed the support of the staff and programs available to deaf students. "The smaller size of the school gave me more opportunities for one-on-one help."

In 1998 Bridget transferred to **Radford University** where she pursued a major in graphic design. Originally a business major, taking art classes in college renewed an interest in art that Bridget had in high school. Through her classes at Radford, facilitated by sign language interpreters, she learned the design principles and computer skills necessary to work in her field of choice. In addition to interpreting, she received other support services such as note-taking, academic advising, and individualized attention offered by the Disability Resource Office. In the spring of 2000, Bridget graduated from Radford University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Art.

Bridget is employed by Recognition Research Incorporated (RRI) in Blacksburg, Virginia. Her academic and personal training with computers enabled her to secure this job as a data entry operator where she keys medical information into RRI's proprietary database software.

During her free time, Bridget likes to read and collect books on animals. She is also writing a book—a collection of short stories about animals based upon her personal experiences. For the future, Bridget hopes to be a published author as well as a professional in the field of graphic design.

When asked to offer advice to deaf students considering attending college, she suggests that students take a variety of courses to help them decide upon a major. "Also, I advise deaf and hard of hearing students to take advantage of all of the resources available to them and to not feel intimidated by those resources," she concludes.

"I advise deaf and hard of hearing students to take advantage of all the resources available to them and to not feel intimidated by those resources."

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Jason Boyd

Jason Boyd received a cochlear implant about three years ago, and it has helped him be more involved in his work environment and interact with customers on a daily basis. "I have really been a deaf person all my life; however, the hearing aids helped a lot until I could no longer hear out of them. As for now, I function as a hard of hearing person. I am really happy to have a cochlear implant."

Jason resides in Jackson, Mississippi. He attended school without an interpreter or notetaker. He played in the band for six years. Having had a lot of after school sessions with the band director to learn pitch and balance of the instrument, Jason was heavily involved in this extra-curricular activity.

He attended **Hinds Community College** (HCC) for three years (1992–1995) and transferred to **Mississippi State University** for three additional years (1995–1998) to complete his major in Meteorology. While attending Hinds, Jason was a member of the American Student Government Body and HCC Deaf Club. He was also on the Dean's List. He was chosen to attend the Postsecondary Education Consortium (PEC) Leadership Training for one week in Knoxville, Tennessee, in April 1994.

At Mississippi State University, Jason attended the Baptist Student Union and Wesley Foundation. He also attended several off-campus meetings of the National Weather Association and some on-campus meetings of the local Chapter of American Meteorological Society and Northeast Mississippi Storm Chaser.

Hinds Community College helped Jason adjust to the transition from high school to college and to all the new responsibilities that come with this transition. Hinds offered interpreters and notetakers, services that Jason needed but did not think about during his mainstream years.

"As a Generation D (digital) person, I grew up on the World Wide Web," he says. "In college I studied web-related disciplines and worked part-time designing IP sites." Jason is currently employed as a Web Developer with TPI Internet Incorporated, located in Jackson. TPI Internet, Inc. is one of the largest independent telecommunications companies in the Southeastern United States. Jason works with all the latest software development packages and hardware technologies. In December of 2000 Jason was promoted to Senior Web Developer.

Don't let others' influences make you do what they want you to do. Listen to their words, and make judgments of your own.

During Jason's free time, he does freelance work on media, graphic design, and publication designs. He is a member of the State Outreach and Technical Assistance Center's (SOTAC) Advisory Board Committee, and he is also a member of the Office on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board. He is a member of the Rankin County Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees). He enjoys attending all the home games of the Jackson Bandit Hockey Team. He also attends the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, Mississippi Chorus, and Mississippi Opera.

Jason advises deaf and hard of hearing students to follow their hearts and let them lead in the direction they need to go. "Don't let others' influences make you do what they want you to do. Listen to their words, and make judgments of your own." Jason's future plan is to go up each step of the ladder as far as he can go. "I let time and God decide the future for my life," he says.

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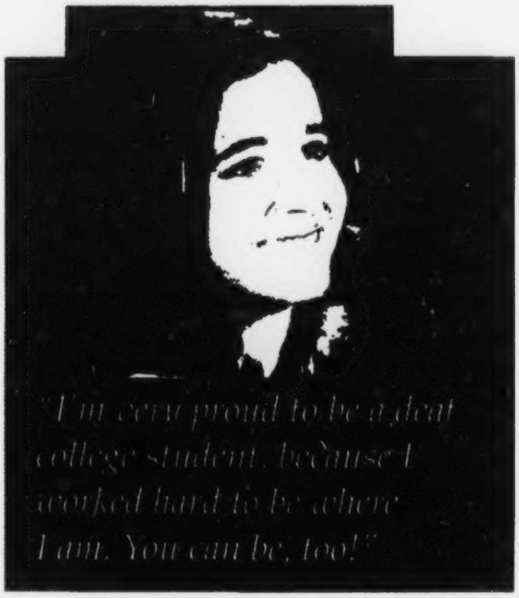
Diana G. Carraway

Diana G. Carraway has little pity for those who think that school is too hard. "Get over it! School is hard for everybody," she says. "Life is hard for everybody, doubly so for deaf people. People respect education and individuals who work hard. A lot of people respect deaf people, because things come harder for us, and we have to work harder. I'm very proud to be a deaf college student, because I worked hard to be where I am. You can be, too!"

Diana's parents believe that her and her brother's deafness were either caused by incompatible chromosomes (side effects of a medicine taken by their mother during her pregnancies) or caused by genetics. Her family has no knowledge of any deaf people in their family's past.

Diana was mainstreamed in public schools from kindergarten until her senior year in high school. The school system provided her with an interpreter for every class. "I was given the choice to go the school for the deaf and blind, but I did not have a real desire to go there and leave my family," she says.



"I'm very proud to be a deaf college student, because I worked hard to be where I am. You can be, too!"

Currently, she works at Wakulla Bank in Crawfordville, Florida—twenty miles south of Tallahassee—as Quality Control Manager for the Customer Service Department. Diana explains, "I have many job duties, and my main responsibility is to make sure all documents pertaining to customer service pass bank policies." Diana heard about the job two years ago when a friend, who worked in the bank, told her about a job opening working for a bank Vice President. The job was already filled by the time Diana had her interview with the Vice President; however, at that time the Customer Service department was creating a Quality Control position." It was a part-time job," Diana states, "and perfect for a college student like me. I was given the position!"

Diana's job requires that she contact employees of all branches." I can't talk on the phone," she explains, "and Wakulla Bank cannot allow the use of the relay service, since it violates the confidentiality policy. How did I solve the problem? Fax. We fax notes back and forth. When something needs to be explained in depth, I simply go to my boss and let her take care of it. This whole system works out well."

Diana adds, "This job really brings out my organizational skills. I'm proud of the efficiency I bring to the department. I communicate well with my coworkers and my boss. I worked hard to learn everything so that I can perform anything my boss asks me to do." Diana's favorite part of the job is the independence it provides. "I work at my own pace, set my own hours, and develop my own system of doing my job," she says. "I can now use my own judgment about the quality of the documents that I receive."

Diana's postsecondary educational experience included attendance at three different institutions, including **Auburn University** in Alabama, **Tallahassee Community College**, and now **Florida State University**. She is presently a full-time student, majoring in Management of Information Systems (MIS), which is a business degree with an emphasis on computers. "I will graduate in either the Fall of 2001 or the Spring of 2002," she states.

(cont'd.)

Originally, Diana majored in Forestry. She attended Auburn University her freshman year, and—after deciding to change majors—she went home to Florida and finished her core requirements at Tallahassee Community College. After starting her job at the bank and developing an interest in finance and business, she decided on a major in Business and chose MIS as her specialty." The MIS program at FSU is very good," she says. "I am not involved in any extracurricular activities at this time, although at Auburn I joined a worship group and played intramural sports. Now I am too busy working, going to school, and studying!"

"Auburn," Diana shares, "was very good about offering transcription services. My sign language interpreter once had to miss class, and I was given a tape-recorder. After turning in the tape, I got transcribed lecture notes a few days later. I really liked this service." At Tallahassee Community College (TCC), the office serving students who are disabled contracted with an independent company of freelancing interpreters to provide interpreters for Diana's classes and now has a full-time staff interpreter. "Florida State has given me unlimited freedom in scheduling my classes," Diana says. "They have been consistent in providing notetakers, interpreters, priority registration, use of computer labs, and anything else they have to offer. The Student Resource Disability Center is very helpful. The professors are understanding and accommodating. I enjoy taking classes at FSU."

Diana's older brother is also deaf. He attended the same schools as Diana, but he now attends The University of Florida in Gainesville. "He and I can talk and lipread," she shares. "No other family members know any sign language. My parents were encouraged to raise us orally, but by going to school with other deaf children we learned sign language. We both rely on interpreters in our classes." Diana has a large extended family. "I believe I can speak for my brother when I say that we owe our successes to them. Our parents encouraged us to go to college. They supported us playing team sports. They gave us the opportunity to go to a camp nearby for Deaf Week ever year as we were growing up. They've always told us that they believed in us and nothing was impossible for us. Was it ever said that nothing counts in life but family? Okay, I'm getting a little sappy here!"

Over the years, Diana has benefited greatly from many technological advances. "Digital hearing aids have been a great help. I have partial hearing, helpful for reading lips," she says. "The digital hearing aids really improve my communication skills. I am able to lipread with more accuracy. I am completely lost without them."

Diana is quick to add that she would be lost without TTYs and closed captioning as well. "I didn't have closed captioning growing up and missed out on some great TV shows. I was not familiar with 'Sesame Street' and 'Mister Rogers,'" she says. "You know what absolutely ticks me off? The Discovery Channel and The Learning Channel are supposed to be educational channels, but half the programs they air do not have closed captions!"

When Diana was living in a dorm at Auburn, the Housing Department provided her with a door knocker and a fire alarm with a light. "I also depend on my vibrating alarm clock and my gadget thing that turns lamps on and off when the phone is ringing!" she says. "I love the independence I have now." She adds that she thinks the Internet is fantastic. "There are no barriers for the deaf in the world of the Internet. We don't have to worry about communication."

Diana's advice to middle school and high school students who are deaf is simply the following: "Go to school! I cannot stress that enough. Learning written English skills is very important," she believes. "It does matter. College requires a lot of research papers. They are very strict about how well the papers are written. Also, many jobs require reports, proposals, projects, etc. Well-written resumes or job applications can land you jobs. And, you will want jobs that are interesting, challenging, and not an insult to your intelligence. Who wants to spend the rest of their lives flipping hamburgers? Flipping hamburgers doesn't require good English grammar skills. Good jobs do."

Phyllis Charlene Dority

"College is not just about having fun."

"College is not just about having fun," says Phyllis Charlene Dority. "I learned my lesson my first few years here. College life is to help high school deaf students learn to be independent and to explore their interests in order to decide a major. It is important to study and keep studying."

Phyllis, who goes by the name Charlie, lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. She was pronounced profoundly deaf at the age of five, due to spinal meningitis at thirteen months of age. She learned how to speak and lipread while a child. "I was in kindergarten for two years," she shares, "to give me more time to learn vocabulary skills." Charlie was also home schooled for four years. She graduated high school from Wake Christian Academy.

Charlie now works part-time at Eismann & Associates as a Computer Graphics Designer. She interned last summer at Eismann & Associates as a student at **Gardner-Webb University** (GWU). At GWU, Charlie is studying Communication Studies and specializing in Electronic Publishing. "I changed my major," she explains, "from Biology to Electronic Publishing, because I believe that I have a lot of artistic and creative talents. In fact, I was involved in Joyful Hands Sign Choir and received two awards for my involvement." Charlie was also involved in the deaf club and made the honor roll last year.

Charlie enjoys her job at Eismann & Associates. "When I first met her, I told Suzanne Eismann about my disability," Charlie says, recounting her struggles to find a job. "I was very honest and determined. She was very patient with me and worked with me one-on-one. She made sure that I understood everything."

"I find the services to deaf students at GWU very beneficial," Charlie adds, "such as tutors, notetakers, interpreters, and C-print™. As an oral deaf person, I cannot always understand teachers as they walk around the classroom. Interpreters are a wonderful assistance. Since I also cannot listen and write notes at the same time, I'm lucky the school provided notetakers and C-print™. I'm still not used to American Sign Language, and that's why I really appreciate the C-print™."

Charlie appreciates the role technology plays in her life; however, she did have one negative experience because of TTYs and relay services. "When I sent my resume and cover letter to different companies, I heard nothing from them," she explains. "So, I made myself call them. Since I have a TTY, I had to go through a relay operator. They must have known at that point that I am hearing-impaired, and they seemed as if they were afraid to hire me because of my disability. I did get frustrated, but Eismann & Associates—as I said—was open to hiring someone with a disability."

Charlie has little free time for extracurricular activities, as she stays very busy. When she does have free time, she enjoys "hanging out with my friends and watching movies. I also go jogging to help relieve my test anxieties and stress." Charlie also enjoys seeing her family and spending quality time with them.

After graduation, Charlie will start looking for a full-time job. "I'm not sure what I'll do," she says. "Maybe I will do deaf missions work or something like that to explore other things. I may look into wildlife photography, since I took a photography course."

Abbey Drigot

Abbey Drigot was born profoundly deaf to hearing parents and has an older, hearing sister and a twin sister who is deaf. She has lived in several different states throughout her life, beginning in Wisconsin and now in Florida.

Abbey and her family learned sign language when she was two years old. She attended mainstream schools during her elementary and middle school years. Upon entering high school, she attended the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) in Washington, D.C. While she studied there, she and her twin sister met a genetics doctor and inquired about the cause of their deafness. Both sisters were surprised to discover that they have Waardenburg Syndrome, which is more than likely the cause of their hearing loss.

After graduating from MSSD in 1995, Abbey entered college at **Jacksonville State University** (JSU) in Jacksonville, Alabama. She majored in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Forensic Investigation. Her participation in the Judicial Board program for three years in high school sparked her interest in this major; Abbey knew that forensics would be an interesting field of study. In addition, she is fascinated with photography and took two photography courses as electives while in college.

Throughout college, Abbey was very involved in the Student Organization for Deaf Awareness (SODA). Occasionally, she would go to Disability Support Services (DSS) for assistance with minor problems, such as classes, interpreters, etc. She remained a full-time student during school and graduated with pride in the Spring of 1999.

"My search for a job was challenging," she says. Searching nationwide via the Internet, she applied for approximately fifty job openings. Most of the openings on which she focused were in the southeastern area of the United States. She interviewed with four different potential employers and found success with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) within about fourteen months after graduating. After being hired as the Photography Forensic Technologist (FT) with the FDLE, she and her fiancé moved to Fort Myers, Florida.

As a Photography FT, Abbey primarily photographs latent fingerprints from evidence and maintains equipment. She will soon be providing assistance at crime scenes as well. "One of the many things I've been very grateful for and impressed with after coming to work at FDLE," she says, "is the high motivation of the department and the co-workers I work closely with."

In Abbey's free time, she can be found relaxing at home. Occasionally, she and her fiancé enjoy taking their dogs for a run on their bicycles or rollerblades. They also enjoy swimming at the pool and the beach.

Abbey is grateful for the growing technology in her life and uses the computer and a pager most often. "The computer is very helpful," she explains. "I can do almost anything on it." At her job she can communicate with her co-workers within the Department using online chat rooms. She also gets a lot of benefit from her pager, which she describes as the best and quickest way to reach her.

Abbey's advice to high school students who are deaf is to first decide what interests them. Then, she suggests, go to the very school that offers such courses. "In my situation I stayed focused in school, but each individual will have different goals, which is normal. When it comes to looking for a job, for some people it may take little time, but for others it takes longer and may be more difficult. In my opinion, continuing to think positively and having patience are the best pieces of advice." She further reminds students that there are many places to look for a job, such as the Internet, newspapers, posted advertisements, connections through friends and acquaintances, and much more.

Abbey thanks Vocational Rehabilitation in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, for working hard in supporting her by providing interpreters, sign language class, equipment, and much more. She is also grateful to the Deaf Service Center in Fort Myers, which has also worked hard to provide interpreters for her and requested funds to provide sign language classes for her co-workers.

When asked about her future plans, Abbey is clearly taking it easy and enjoying life. "I don't have my whole future planned, but I would like to remain employed at the FDLE for a long time and get married in the near future."

Duane Hymes

Duane Hymes has a congenital bilateral hearing loss that ranges from severe to profound. He attended programs for hard of hearing and deaf students at Seminole Elementary and Sligh Junior High Schools—both oral programs in Tampa—and eventually graduated from Tampa's Chamberlain High School, a total communication program.

After graduating from Chamberlain, Duane enrolled in **Erwin Technical Center**, a public technical school in Tampa. Duane first attended the SAIL remediation classes for basic math, reading, and English. Upon completion of his remediation, Duane entered the Printing and Graphics program where he excelled. He contributed to the school newspaper, *The Erwin Times*, and he was a member of the National Vocational Technical Honor Society, graduating with a 3.83 GPA in January 1995.

"Following graduation," Duane explains, "I was hired almost immediately by Great Western Finance (now Washington Mutual Finance) to work in the Print and Distribution Department. I was informed of the job opening by my instructor, Vernon Wynn, who highly recommended me for the job."

His job entails a variety of duties, including distributing incoming mail for the corporate headquarters; preparing outgoing packages for pickup and delivery by FedEx, UPS, and Airborne; printing memos and manuals for over five hundred branches nationwide; and, printing all documents needed by the company.

On July 14, 2000, Duane received "Team Member of the Month" from Washington Mutual Finance's Print and Distribution Department for his willingness to work through his lunch break and after hours to complete projects and meet deadlines in addition to his punctuality, dependability, easy-going personality, and hard work. Along with a statuette, he received a generous monetary bonus.

In his free time, Duane enjoys working on his computer, playing video games, listening to music, reading poetry, and lifting weights.

When asked about any advice for deaf/hard of hearing high school students, Duane says, "You need to go to some type of postsecondary school to get a certificate, diploma, or degree to help prepare you for a job and your future."

"You need to go to some type of postsecondary school to get a certificate, diploma, or degree to help prepare you for a job and your future."

Chris Kisling

Chris Kisling is a full-time student at North **Harris College** in Texas. He plans to transfer to a University and major in Engineering with a minor in Marketing. "My father is a pilot, and that field always interested me," Chris explains. "However, my deafness prevents me from being a professional pilot. The engineering interest was spawned by my love of space engineering."

Chris lives in Montgomery, Texas. He was born hearing and became deaf at the age of one, due to meningitis. He grew up and attended schools in Colorado. His elementary education was in mainstreamed classrooms. However, his junior and high school years were spent in a School for the Deaf. "I always loved a challenge," Chris says, "and the more challenging, the better. My favorite subjects were the sciences, including Physics, Chemistry, and Biology." Chris won several awards during his years at school. "The two I'm the most proud of were in Science and a statewide recognition for top sportsmanship; I also played football in school."

Chris is able to take advantage of Interactive Television (ITV) at North Harris College. ITV is similar to teleconferencing. Two individuals at any distance from one another can communicate and see each other simultaneously via cameras. It is an extremely beneficial way of communicating between deaf and hearing individuals, as both auditory and visual communication is provided.

In his free time, Chris enjoys radio planes and driving his 4x4 in the mud! He also describes himself as a computer geek. He adds, "I want to be a high-powered executive in the engineering field or the first deaf man in space."

"I would advise students," Chris says, "to accept challenge as a positive thing. I like a challenge, and I like that I have never felt that people were looking down on me. Students need to remember—when faced with obstacles—to accept them as challenges and never give up."

"Accept
challenge
as a
positive
thing."

William E. Koch, Sr.

William E. Koch, Sr. is a Graphic Technician for Exxon Mobil in Texas. "I was a former Mobil employee," he explains. "After Exxon and Mobil merged, I was offered this position and accepted."

William has been deaf since the age of five. At nine months , he was diagnosed with spinal meningitis. His hearing progressively deteriorated to the point of total hearing loss at five years of age.

He majored in Electrical Engineering at Lee **College** in Baytown, Texas. "I have an interest in the Internet," he says, "and wish to become proficient in web design and development."

William is also grateful for the technology that makes his life a little easier. "E-mail makes communication easy as well as Texas Relay. I also have a cell phone with a TTY connection that is handy."

As a part-time student at **North Harris College,** William is grateful for the services he receives as a student who is deaf. "The instructors, too, understand the special needs of the deaf students and the fellowship of the students," he says. "The overall attention given by the program to the special needs of all deaf students is nice."

William has little time for extracurricular activities due to working full-time. When he has the free time, however, he enjoys helping out with Deaf Awareness Week; scuba diving; photography; bowling; traveling; and participating in the Houston deaf community. "Although I'm divorced," he says, "I maintain an active relationship with my married son, and I enjoy my two grandchildren. My second son is away at college, but he keeps in touch. I also maintain a close bond with my elderly parents."

"Education is so important in today's society," says William. "Simply graduating from high school is not enough. Continuing education not only helps you in a career, but it continues to enrich your mind."

As for his future plans, William hopes that the skills gained from the classes he is currently taking will some day help him start his own business.

"Continuing education not only helps you in a career, but it continues to enrich your mind."

Darby Lambert

Darby Lambert grew up in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. He attended St.Amant Elementary and graduated from St. Amant High School. He has a severe bilateral hearing loss and received resource assistance as a primary student and speech therapy throughout his years in elementary school. In high school he was on the tennis team and baseball team, and he was also involved in the Science Club. At his church, he was part of the retreat team and was active in the church youth group.

His college career began in 1991 at **Southeastern Louisiana University** in Hammond, Louisiana. Shortly thereafter, he transferred to **Louisiana State University** in Baton Rouge to further his studies in Information Systems and Decision Sciences." I spent all of my time studying!" he says.

After earning his Bachelor's degree in 1996, he worked as a lab technician at Pioneer Chlor Alkali in St. Gabriel, Louisiana, for two years before deciding to make a career change. In 1998, he decided to move into the computer industry by becoming a Microsoft Certified Professional. "This enabled me to obtain a position as a PC Technician/Business Systems Analyst at Turner Industries in Baton Rouge," he states.

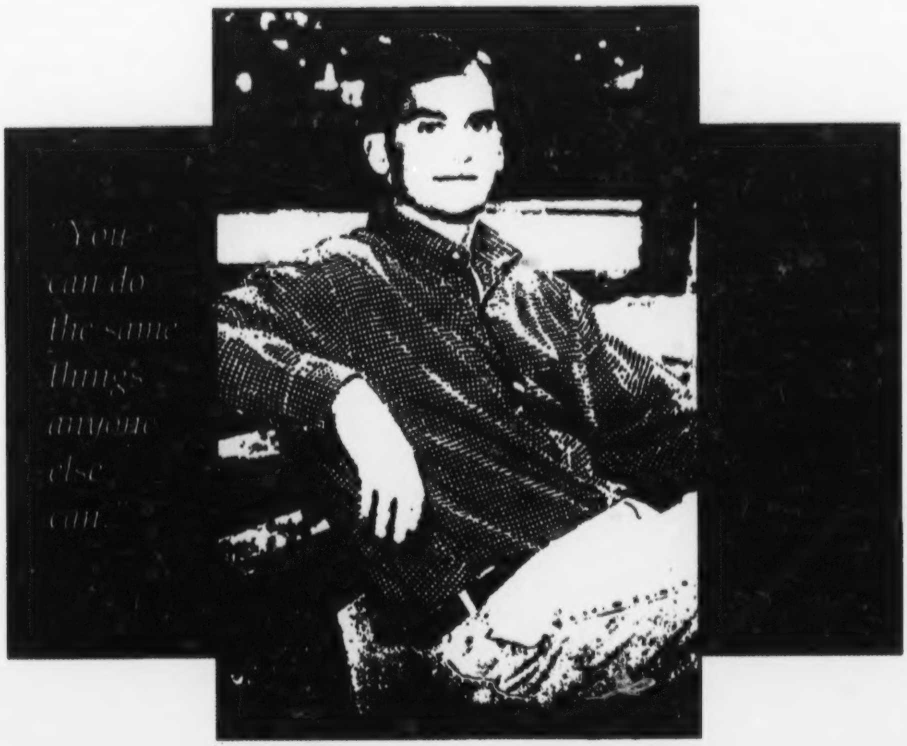
Currently, Darby works for the Ascension Parish School Board in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, as a Programmer/Analyst/Applications Specialist. He helps administer and maintain a piece of software called JD Edwards.

"I have been married to Carla Cedotal for fours years," he adds, "and I am still active in my church in a small faith group. I enjoy playing golf and working with computers. I am a big collector of recipes and hope to create a recipe book in the near future. I enjoy spending time with my family and my wife. We hope to have a family of our own soon."

Darby Lambert with wife Carla

"I spent all of my time studying!"

Wesley Moore



"You can do the same things anyone else can."

Wesley Moore lives in Lyons, Georgia. He was born deaf and had years of speech therapy to learn how to talk. Wesley attended Robert Toombs Christian Academy, a private school, in Lyons. He was involved in football, basketball, baseball, and track.

During his senior year, Wesley was a full-time center on the football team. "This position requires the player to be able to hear the quarterback's cadence," he explains, "so it is an unlikely position for someone who is deaf. But, my quarterback and I had a touch system so that I knew when to snap the ball. The quarterback cupped his hands to receive the ball and bumped me with his top hand while yelling 'hit' to the other players as a signal to start the play." The football team became state runner-up in the Georgia Independent School Association. Wesley received All-Region, All-State Honorable Mention, and Coach Award in football.

Wesley also played right field in baseball, and the baseball team won two state championships. Wesley was named the Christian Athlete of the year for Robert Toombs Christian Academy's 1998-1999 school year. He graduated in 1999.

Currently, Wesley attends **Brewton-Parker College** in Mt. Vernon, Georgia, and is a full-time student. He works part-time at his father's business, Lark Builder, Inc. He is still undecided about his major but is leaning towards getting a degree in Business.

"The most beneficial aspect of attending Brewton-Parker College," he says, "is the support I receive from students, faculty, and the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities."

"You can do the same things anyone else can," Wesley tells high school deaf students.

Kenneth J. Myers

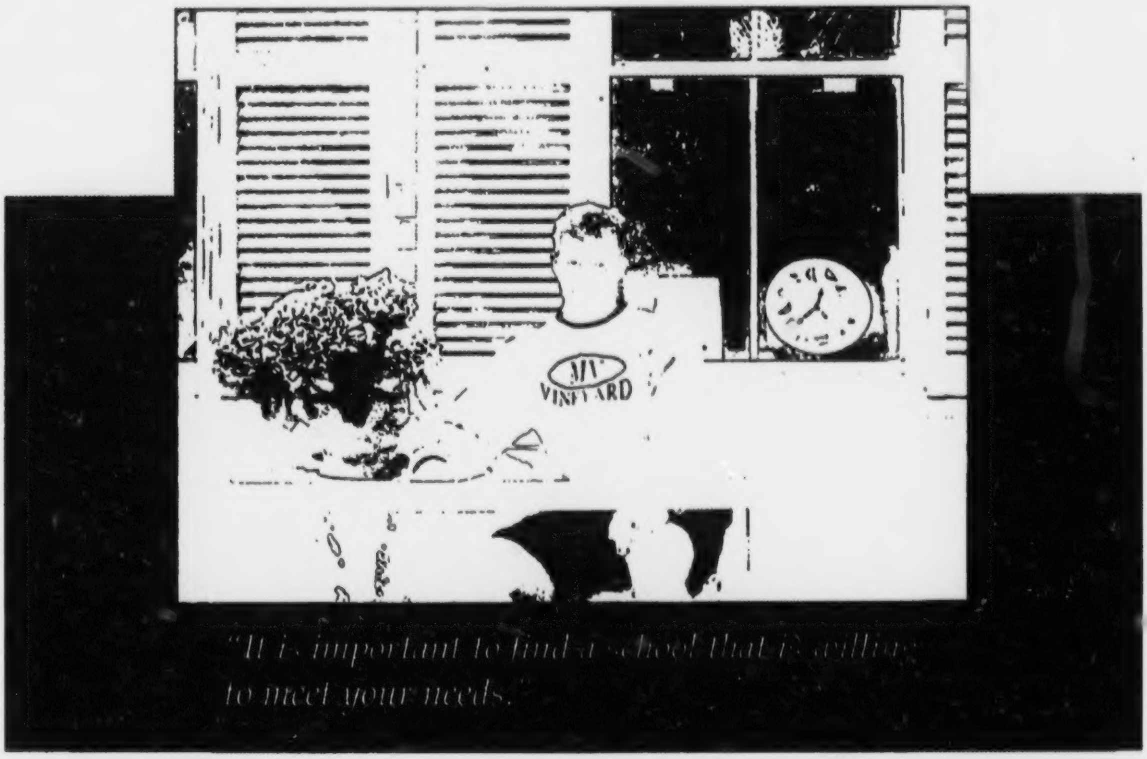
Kenneth J. Myers's passion for his major is evident. "Architecture is something that the deaf can appreciate and understand, perhaps more so than hearing people, because the architectural experience is entirely visual," Ken believes. "A good architect must have an acute sense of geometry beyond what most people learn in school. For many deaf individuals, an exceptional sense of space and geometry is developed through the deaf language. Likewise, sign language is much like that of the language of architecture."

Kenneth grew up in Westminster, Maryland. He lost his hearing late in his freshman year of high school at fifteen years of age because of an ear infection and/or virus and other undetermined causes. He is considered profoundly deaf and does not use hearing aids.

Ken attended Westminster High School from 1990 until his graduation in 1994. While in high school, he was active in several clubs and extra-curricular activities including Key Club, National Honor Society, and Varsity Tennis. He was on the Homecoming Court and the Prom Court during his senior year.

Ken is currently an Intern Architect at Morris and Ritchie Associates (MRA) in Baltimore, Maryland. He works with others to develop designs for clients in constructing new buildings and renovations of existing buildings. Ken is responsible for making decisions that directly affect the outcome of the finished building. He spends most of his time drawing construction documents that are used to assemble the building. As most Intern Architects in their first year, Ken feels he learns more every day from working with people that have more experience than he.

After Ken graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree from **Virginia Tech** in May 2000, he sent out resumes to prospective employers and decided MRA was a company that would allow him to play an active role in the design process. "I feel my experience at Virginia



"It is important to find a school that is willing to meet your needs."

Tech has proven valuable for preparing me for my internship," he says. "However, I feel I have other, inherent qualities that are also important to my success."

Ken began his academic studies at Virginia Tech during the Fall semester of 1994 as an Engineering major. After almost two years he made the decision to change his major to Architecture. During college, Ken encouraged students and community members to learn sign language by establishing and maintaining a sign language club. He feels the most helpful thing for him about Virginia Tech was the willingness they had to accommodate his needs. Initially, he chose Virginia Tech because of its academic record. He was the only deaf person using an interpreter on campus for several years until others became aware that Tech had an interpreting program. "I think Virginia Tech struggled in the beginning to get things right," he says, "but I left with good feelings about the new interpreting program that has, since it's inception, attracted more students."

What he liked the most about the program—especially during the last few years—was that the interpreters were very flexible and easy to contact. "Faculty members were also very helpful, willingly providing notes when asked and agreeing to allow all reasonable accommodations without resistance," Ken explains.

Ken enjoys playing tennis, participating in church activities, spending time with his family, fooling around with the computer, and playing with his cat in his free time. He married his girlfriend from high school a little over two years ago and hopes to have children one day. Ken also has the goal of designing and building a house for his family.

With respect to technology, Ken thinks the TTY is the most useful for him. Although he does not use one right now, he feels the new cellular TTY will be especially helpful to him in the future when he becomes an accredited architect and is responsible for keeping in contact with others when he is out of the office. Ken also feels, when it becomes a little easier, using off-site interpreters via satellite would be much easier than trying to recruit an interpreter for every meeting.

Ken offers the following advice for high school deaf students: "First of all, be open minded to all reasonable accommodations. Those who are deaf and are not using an interpreter will find it very difficult to keep up with everyone else, much more so in college than in high school. I know of several people who fell behind because of communication problems and failed out of school, simply because they refused to use an interpreter. That's not to say that it's impossible for a deaf person to graduate without an interpreter, but it's important to know what it will take for you to succeed in the academic environment inherent to your major. It is also important to find a school that is willing to meet your needs."

William Ostheimer

William Ostheimer is currently completing his second semester of college at **The University of Louisiana at Lafayette** (ULL). He advises deaf and hard-of-hearing students to study hard. "Learn all you can in high school," he says, "to prepare for college or work and life after graduation."

He has been deaf since he was two years old as the result of a high fever. He attended private schools and graduated from Edward Douglas White Catholic High School in 1996 where he participated in a variety of sports, including football, baseball, and track and field. He was involved in Key Club and the Letterman's Club as well. He did not learn sign language until he attended **Hinds Community College**. He used oral communication and lipreading as his means of communication. "It was difficult for me," he says, "because I had no interpreter or notetakers in high school.".

William decided to attend Hinds Community College in Raymond, Mississippi, because there was an excellent program for deaf and hard of hearing students. At Hinds, William served as President and Vice-president of the Deaf Club, a student representative of the Association of Student Government, and a member of the track team. Not long after being at Hinds, William realized that he needed to learn sign language, and he took two American Sign Language classes to be able to communicate with the other deaf students. He graduated from Hinds with an Associate of Arts degree in 1999.

He now attends The University of Louisiana at Lafayette and is majoring in Business Systems, Analysis and Technology. "The notetakers, tutors, and interpreters have helped me, and I am making good grades. The first semester I was here my grades were very good. I made a 2.8."

When William has free time, he enjoys fishing, working on his farm, and spending time with his family and friends. His future plans are to continue his education and receive a Bachelor's degree.

"Learn all you can
in high school to
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after graduation."

Hollie Parker

"A lot of people in this world," says Hollie Parker of Gillsville, Georgia, "think that people with disabilities have limits as far as education and careers. I not only had to prove it to myself but also to those who thought I would not go far. I have to deal with ignorant people all the time. We need to show these people that we can succeed."

Hollie, who is hard of hearing and attended mainstreamed classes throughout her education, is now attending **Georgia Perimeter College** in Clarkston, Georgia, and is considering a major in Accounting. "I am a returning student after seven years, and I'm currently taking three classes," she says. "I've been working in the accounting field for the past four years. I have enjoyed it."

The job Hollie speaks of is her Data Entry position with Mansfield Oil Company in Gainesville. "I work in the Accounts Payable department. This summer I plan to take some computer courses on the side to increase my knowledge of computers."

"The reason I chose Georgia Perimeter College," she explains, "is because they provide services for the hard of hearing and deaf. The service I am most in need of is notetaking. The program is great, and—because of it—I can do better in my classes."

Hollie is the single mother of a four-year old son, Meleech (pictured with her, above right). "He is the love of my life!" she says. "I want to set a good example for him. I go to school two days a week and work eleven hours three days a week. I plan to get my four-year degree so that I can provide a financially secure life for me and my son."

Hollie believes very strongly in having goals. "It is very important to increase your education so that you can better yourself and your family. Everyone has goals. If college isn't one of them, that's okay. But, go after your goals, and don't let anyone take them away from you."

"Many people," she adds, "think that once you leave college, you never return. Yes, it is hard to go back, but you can do it! I am full-time employee, full-time student, and a full-time single mother. People can do anything they set their minds to. My family is very supportive and encouraging, and—with that—I am doing what I want to do."

"Go after your goals—and don't let anyone take them away from you.

Chris Partain

Chris Partain lives in Maryville, Tennessee, and works full-time for Remotec, Inc., in Oak Ridge as an Electrical Assembler. "I build circuit boards," he explains, "for robotics."

Chris, who was born deaf, began his education at the Tennessee School for the Deaf where he stayed until graduation in 1994. "I studied in their general academic program and took some vocational classes as well, such as art, print editor, typing, and home economics classes."

In 1995, Chris enrolled at **Pellissippi State Technical Community College** (PSTCC) and majored in Electrical Engineering. He completed his Associate of Science degree in May 2000. "I decided to go in this field," he explains, "because when I was young, I always took things apart and put them back together! Also, I enjoyed helping my friends install and repair their car stereos. In addition, I like to work with computers."

"You need an education and work experience to get through all that our modern lives demand and to ensure a good future."

"PSTCC," Chris adds, "has very helpful instructors. They make sure that the students understand what they are teaching. I also got a lot of hands-on experience with various projects there. Of course, they also provided me interpreters and tutors for classes. They met all my needs."

In his free time, Chris enjoys outdoor activities, such as fishing, hiking, and camping. He also greatly enjoys basketball and volleyball. Chris participates in the Knoxville chapter of the Tennessee Association for the Deaf as well, and—most importantly—he enjoys spending time with his family. "We are there for one another when we need help. I love to help my mom clean the house and the yard."

Chris advises young deaf and hard of hearing students to consider a postsecondary education. "College helps," he says, "to build a broader knowledge of what life is really like. You need an education and work experience to get through all that our modern lives demand and to ensure a good future." Chris also encourages good study habits and time management. "Don't forget to go see your instructors, too, when you need help."

Chris is looking forward to the future. "I want to be successful with my career and have a family, and I'd like to settle down in a nice home."

Jonathan Eric Rice

"Check out the school you are thinking about [attending], and make sure they provide good support services that you will need in order to succeed."

Jonathan Eric Rice, who goes by Eric, lives in Dayton, Tennessee, and is twenty-five years old. He currently works for Tennessee Rand Automation in Red Bank, Tennessee, as an assembler of robotic cells and automation accessories.

"I became deaf," he explains, "when I was one year old as the result of having measles and ear infections." Eric began elementary school at Frazier Elementary in Dayton and then transferred to White Oak Elementary in Chattanooga. He played football for Red Bank High School and graduated in 1994.

Eric began taking classes at **Chattanooga State Technical Community College** (CSTCC) in the Fall of 1994. He took a break from school and re-entered as a part- time student. Once becoming a full-time student at CSTCC, Eric knew that he wanted to study in the Industrial Technology Division. He completed his Machine Tool Technology Certificate in May of 2000.

Eric attended both part-time and full-time at various times during his education. His initial interest was electricity, but he soon became interested in pursuing work as a machinist as well. While a full-time student at CSTCC, Eric was also an active member with the Deaf Student Association. He participated in the Deaf Club at Octoberfest, Fun in the Sun, and Mud Volleyball.

With the guidance of his brother, Eric found a job in 1995 at Lawson Electric Company. His former boss at Lawson told Eric about a job at Tennessee Rand Automation. In 1997, Eric was hired as a part-time employee there, and in 1998 he switched to full-time work. "My former boss at Lawson Electric," Eric says, "became my boss at Tennessee Rand!"

Although he is working full-time now for Tennessee Rand Automation, he has returned to school to complete a certificate program in electricity in order to learn more about it. "I am learning more about PLC (programmable logic controllers) that are used in my work environment," he says. As a full-time employee, Eric pays for his own tuition and is not receiving any financial aid. "What I learn at Chattanooga State in my program helps me to be more skilled at my job," Eric says.

"Chattanooga State," he adds, "is able to provide interpreters for my classes. When I need them, notetakers are also provided. Chattanooga State is able to work with me and my work hours by providing classes and services in the evening when needed. The college works very well with deaf and hard of hearing students to provide whatever services they need to succeed."

Eric has very little free time. "I seem to work most of the time," Eric explains, "putting in lots of over time and travel out of state with my job. I do find time to associate with my former deaf and hard of hearing classmates. I also have strong family ties and enjoy the loving support of my family in what I do with my life."

Eric would like to encourage other deaf and hard of hearing students to go to college or a technical school and take classes in order to get a full-time job in the future and become self-sufficient. "Check out the school you are thinking about," he says, "and make sure they provide good support services that you will need in order to succeed."

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Lee Trevathan

Lee Trevathan, who was born deaf, lives in Brandon, Mississippi. He attended Magnolia Speech School and later transferred to Clinton High School.

Lee attended **Hinds Community College** where he learned sign language and met many new friends. He also served as President for the Hinds Community College Deaf Club for the 1994–1995 school year.

All his life, Lee has enjoyed working with various plants and flowers, and he enjoys different areas within landscaping. "I was born with a green thumb," he says. He wanted a job he would enjoy going to every day, and that is why he chose Landscape Management Technology as his major at Hinds. He served as the Treasurer for the Landscape Management Club for the 1999-2000 school year and won second place in wood construction at the National Landscape Contractors of America's Student Career Day in Lexington, Kentucky, in March of 1999.

Having graduated in May of 2000, Lee started his own business, Perennial Lawn Care. He attributes much of his success to modern technology. "I use a digital pager and TTY car phone to communicate with clients at work," he explains. "I use the Mississippi Relay Service at home. Modern technology enables me to communicate freely with my clients at any given time."

Lee believes the Hinds Community College Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program is unmatchable. "My teacher in Landscape Management," he explains, "showed a genuine concern for me. She guided me towards the best possible route for what I wanted to do and constantly encouraged personal excellence."

"I encourage other students," Lee says, "to pursue their dreams and not to give up until they come true. I believe students should enroll in college as soon as they finish high school and study as much as they can."

"I encourage other students to pursue their dreams and not to give up until they come true."

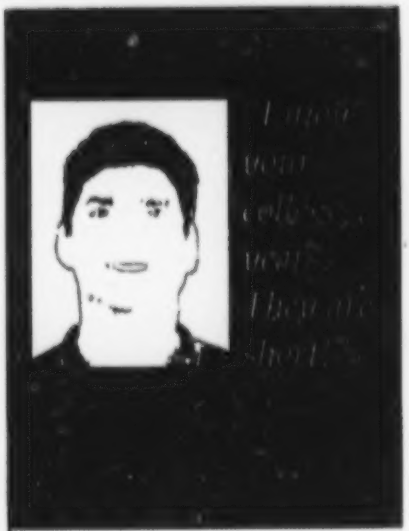
David Volper

David Volper enrolled in four classes at St. **Petersburg Junior College** (SPJC) in the Fall of 1997." This was the beginning," he says, "of a fruitful relationship between myself and my chosen institution of higher learning." David would go on to maintain at least a 3.6 GPA or better and benefit from modern technology that was imperative to his continued academic success during his tenure at the school.

"The technology that SPJC has available to deaf students on campus," he explains, "includes TDDs, e-mail for establishing correspondence with our teachers, a plethora of computers available to all SPJC students on campus at the Learning Support Center, and a wonderful library that provides an expansive collection of educational materials that proves invaluable to students at this school."

David believes that his decision to enroll at SPJC is one of the best he has ever made. "The re-introduction to an institution of higher learning," he says, "was critical to gaining the proper perspective and appreciation for the trials and tribulations of college level courses. I knew that I would leave college in a state of mind where I felt confident and capable of handling a 'real' job in the 'real' world. The education that SPJC provided for me was worth every penny of tuition, books, and supplies. SPJC was a bridge from the past to the future, and I'm proud to say that—as a deaf student—I crossed that bridge!"

When asked about advice to young, deaf students, it is evident that David gives it a great deal of thought. In fact, he stresses that he has three pieces of advice for deaf or hard of hearing students considering a postsecondary education. "This is for deaf students everywhere—all deaf students that are considering a college education after completing high school and all deaf middle school students who are thinking about college for the first time," he says. "Read, read, and read some more! This will foster an understanding of English that will benefit all prospective college students as they go through tougher levels of college courses throughout their collegiate careers."



"Enjoy your college years. They are short!"

"Secondly," he adds, "all classes are difficult! There is no such thing as an easy class. Prospective college students should prepare for every class as if it were the most demanding and most time-consuming class on the schedule. It is very common for first-time college students to assume that classes will be easy and that they can always make up work that is missed or late. This may be true in high school or middle school, but not in college. College professors will not be as flexible, as all college students are treated like adults who are responsible for themselves."

David's third piece of advice is to study hard. "Don't overstudy, and don't understudy! Find a balance that is comfortable and stick with it. Make time to study and relax. Make time to have fun, but stick with that schedule. Never let the desire to have fun override the responsibilities of class work. Also, handle peer pressure by staying committed to your goals. Enjoy your college years. They are short!"

Felix Werner, Jr.

Felix Werner, Jr., resides in Picayune, Mississippi, a small community located just a short distance from the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He spends much of his spare time with his wife and both of their families. The farm life is as much a part of him and who he is as anything else he has ever known. His eyes sparkle as he shares the recent birth of his new colt, Ginger. He follows with a chuckle as he is reminded of how his friends tease him about how he named the mare Baby Doll. He continues to describe Ginger's disposition: "Even as a newborn colt, she knew her likes and dislikes; she was stubborn from the beginning. She is amazing!"

Reflecting on his earliest recollection of his hearing loss, Felix shares that his parents noticed when he was two that he was not responding as most toddlers should. Local physicians assured them that nothing was wrong with his hearing. In time, however, Felix was referred to an audiologist who confirmed what his parents had concluded long before.

Felix's early elementary years were spent at Crescent Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana. Crescent Academy specifically addressed the needs of students with disabilities. He recalls the small classes, the focused teachers, and lots of individualized attention. Felix spent his junior and senior high school years in the public school system. During the summer months, he worked at a local grocery store as a bag boy. He recalls how he was teased by his working peers because of his small stature and his disability. In May 1995, Felix graduated from Bay High School in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

Felix's career goals were established early in his life. A formal education was of utmost importance in his family. He reflects on his mother's "realistic" approach on choosing a career. Felix explains, "'Get skilled in something

"Employee training would help people understand that they don't have to feel sorry for someone with a disability

everyone in this area needs,' my mother told me, 'something that will provide continuous work and job security, something you enjoy doing.'" Felix took his mother's advice to heart and was hired for summer employment by a family friend who managed an air-conditioning repair company. His experiences that summer set the stage for what would become his future employment.

In the year that followed, Felix enrolled in community college classes. He subsequently transferred to **Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College/Jefferson Davis Campus** (MGCCC) and enrolled in the Heating and Air-Conditioning Technology Program. When asked about his college experiences and his success at MGCCC, Felix responds, "Knowing that the Special Support Services for Students with Disabilities was available assured me that an interpreter would always be by my side during classes. I also knew where to go if I experienced difficulties in my academics or with classroom instructors and accommodations." He continues, "I also attribute my success to Mr. Robert Bourdin, the Heating and Air-Conditioning second-year instructor at MGCCC. He was patient and paid close attention to individual students. With the most updated equipment, he taught me an understanding of how jobs should be completed in the 'real' work world." Felix's pride is evident as he shares that he was an MGCCC honor graduate in May 2000.

After reflecting on his college experiences, Felix turns his attention to his new career with Geiger Heating and Air in Gulfport, Mississippi. "I like everything about my job." He explains further, "When I drive up to a job and see a customer's old air-conditioning unit, I know that when the job is completed and a new unit is in place, the whole appearance of the house will change—inside and out. This makes the customer smile. That's the best part of the whole job! Geiger is top-rated, very recognizable, and permanent. They make sure that all jobs are completed promptly. I am proud to be an employee of Geiger."

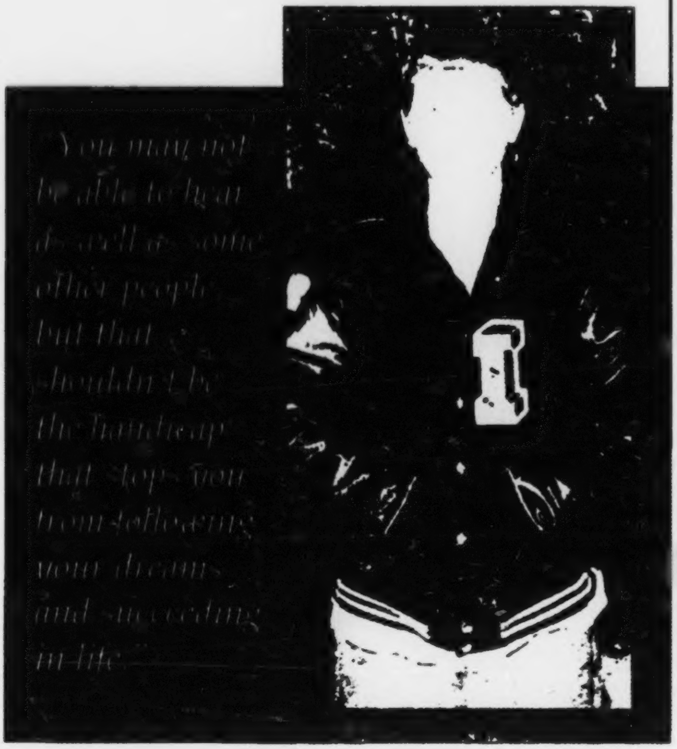
Rarely does Felix focus on his disability, but he does share the difficulties he sometimes faces on the job. "It's difficult at times when I can't hear my co-workers. I have to read lips. Sometimes it is dark in the attics, and those around me get real frustrated. Sometimes they suggest that I shouldn't drive the company trucks, because I can't hear. I tell them, 'Just because I can't hear doesn't mean I can't see.'" Felix laughs at himself with this comment. Through this story he would like to express his concerns about employers providing more training and experiences in the workplace regarding individuals with disabilities. "It would help everyone understand what the disability means. I think it would improve cooperation among workers, and people with disabilities would be treated equally all of the time. Training would help people understand that they don't have to feel sorry for someone with a disability."

Felix offers his advice to high school deaf students about postsecondary education and future work: "First, find something you really like to do. Then work at that job for a summer, and see if it is really something you enjoy doing. If you do, go to college for two or four years. Then you will be happy for the rest of your life. You must have college. Some people discouraged me from going to college. They said it didn't make a difference. But, I felt differently and knew that it was important to pursue my education. I had some experience... but, at college I gained book knowledge, rules, and the proper way to do things on the job. Experience is good, but book knowledge is as important."

Samuel James Woodard

As an infant, Samuel James Woodard experienced many ear infections, which may have caused the nerve damage he now has in his ears. The doctors could not determine how much hearing loss was due to that or how much was hereditary.

Samuel grew up with hearing children and learned to read lips from his sister. He could also hear loud sounds with certain frequencies. Dr. Charles Berlin of the Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital in New Orleans was the first to do a hearing test and determine that Samuel needed hearing aids as a toddler. "He also suggested to my parents that I be put in surroundings with a lot of children my age, so I could learn language from them," Samuel explains. "When I was around three years old, some professionals from the parish school system thought my parents should put me on a bus and send me about forty miles down the road to be in a handicapped school. Dr. Berlin was against this." Samuel's parents then enrolled him in a pre-school in Kentwood, Louisiana, with a lot of children his age with no hearing losses. "They accepted me," Samuel says, "and some were curious about the 'things in my ears.'"



You may not be able to hear as well as some other people but that shouldn't be the handicap that stops you from following your dreams and succeeding in life.

Samuel played baseball from age six to sixteen with the Kentwood Baseball League and also played basketball in the Amite Bitty Basketball League from an early age. "Just because I could not hear as well as the other boys and girls, I wanted to do things that they did," he says. "I did not let my hearing loss stop me. This has followed me through elementary on up through high school. I played baseball and basketball for Independence High School, even lettering in baseball for two years."

As for academics, Samuel took the same courses as the other students, using an interpreter occasionally. "I had to take the LEAP Graduation Exit Exams in order to obtain my high school diploma just like the other students," he says. "I had made up my mind that I would not be satisfied with just a Certificate of Achievement but only with a high school diploma. My parents were so happy and proud the night I walked down the aisle and received my high school diploma. Another student and I were the first hearing impaired students in Tangipahoa Parish that received their high school diploma."

Samuel's parents always encouraged him to study hard in school so that he could find a good job. "At first, I wanted to find a job right out of high school and not go to school, but I found that this was almost impossible. So, in the Fall I decided to go to **Louisiana Technical College** in Greensburg and enroll in Automotive Technology. I have learned so much, and I enjoy attending school there. I like doing things with my hands and enjoy being around people."

Samuel said he hates to think what would have happened had his parents not given him all the love and encouragement that they did to help him succeed in life. "My advice to other students with a hearing loss is to stay in school, get your high school diploma, and attend some type of postsecondary school. You may not be able to hear as well as some other people, but that shouldn't be the handicap that stops you from following your dreams and succeeding in life."

Students Making a Difference Through Cultural Diversity

Sam Boyd

Sam Boyd has had to adapt to many changes since his arrival in the United States. "This is a new challenge for me," he says. "I never dreamed I would get this opportunity."

Sam is an international deaf student from Edinburgh, Scotland, at **Central Piedmont Community College**. He was born deaf and has two hearing sisters and one hearing brother; there are no other deaf people in his family.

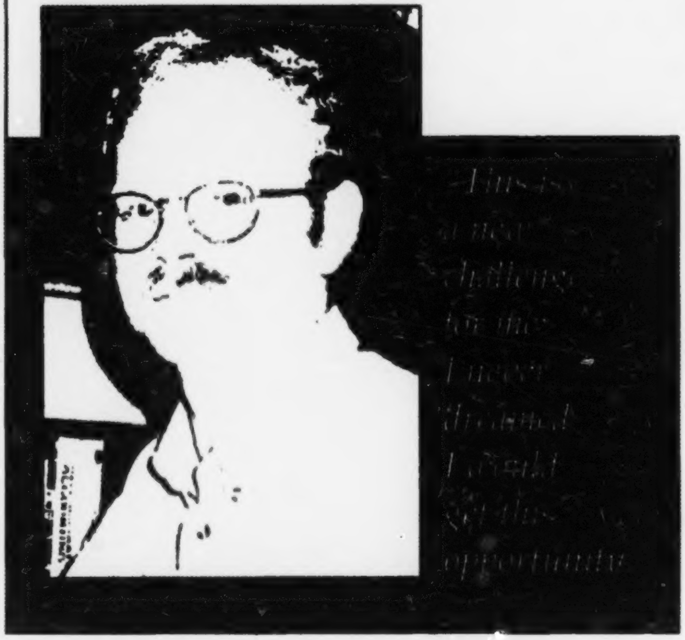
At age three, Sam attended an all deaf preschool. He transferred at the age of five to St. Giles School for the Hearing Impaired in Edinburgh. This school was oral, and sign language was prohibited. Sam continued in school there until the age of sixteen. He then went to a public school, Stevenson College, for one year. "There were no support services offered to the deaf," Sam explains, "except an assisted listening device. This provided some help, but I still had to sit in the front of the class and try to lip read the instructor." He received vocational training as a care giver for the young, the handicapped, and the elderly. The next year he joined a youth training team that provided continuing education in this field and was then offered a job working with the elderly in a nursing home facility. Sam accepted and continued to work there for fifteen years. The last seven years of his employment there was as a Staff Trainer.

Sam had been thinking of changing career paths, and one evening while talking with a friend about his ideas, he was encouraged to make the change. "My friend had given me the push I needed to take a chance," Sam explains. "It just so happened that the friend was living in Charlotte, North Carolina, at the time and was only visiting in Edinburgh. He told me about Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) and offered to help sponsor me and provide me a place to live if I would come to the United States." Sam accepted and is in the United States on an educational Visa. He plans to major in Interior Design.

Sam speaks Scottish English, not American English. The differences in the two have made it necessary for him to take some classes in English and Math before starting his core classes in Interior Design. "At age thirty-three," he adds, "I only wish I had gotten an earlier start on my education. I do appreciate being able to have an oral interpreter, tutoring, and notetaking services available here at CPCC."

When Sam finishes the program at CPCC, he plans to return to Scotland and take another year of Creative Design. While in Charlotte, he is leading a quiet life, concentrating on his studies. He likes to watch comedy programs, garden, go canoeing, and socialize.

His ultimate goal is to one day be as well known in Scotland as Martha Stewart is in the States.



Joshua Seth Dowling

"Be open minded, and accept change in order to make yourself a better person."

Joshua Seth Dowling, who became deaf at the age of six months and primarily attended mainstreamed programs as a child, is a full-time student at **The University of Oklahoma** where he has been named into the National Junior Honor Society and the National Honor Society. He initially chose French as his major. "I found the language beautiful and interesting," he explains.

Joshua read a brochure describing an exchange program to France, became very interested, and decided to apply. The interview process for studying abroad was long. "The process of preparing myself for it was even longer," he explains. "I was originally to stay in France for a year—until June 2001. The University of Oklahoma had secured an interpreter for me in the town of Clermont-Ferrand, situated approximately two-hundred and forty miles south of Paris."

"I was the first deaf person to be accepted in any abroad program at the University, and I was very proud," Joshua explains. In addition, he received the Sy Fielder Scholarship for his studies abroad. "I got onto the plane, flew to Europe, and I enjoyed Paris so much, because it was a dream come true."

The University of Blaise Pascal in France, however, posed a different picture than Joshua had envisioned. "The services for deaf students over there, if you can call it that, lacked many things I took for granted in the United States. The services were very slow, and interpreters often were not certified. In addition, classes were not well-structured, and I often found myself sad and lonely. Anyone who goes overseas for a long period of time will experience culture shock, homesickness, etc. In my case, though, the problems were more serious. I had no way of communicating with my family on my own. I had to rely on hearing people to place a phone call for me. There are no TTYs in France, and there are no relay services. Deaf people in France, based on what I observed, seem to lack many writing and mathematical skills and are less independent than American deaf people."

For these reasons, Joshua decided to return to the United States much earlier than he had expected. "Do not get me wrong," he says. "I loved France, and it is a beautiful country. However, do think twice before studying in another country for more than a semester, because it is very difficult overseas, especially if you are deaf or hard of hearing."

"I strongly encourage foreign travel, because it is an exciting experience. Just be prepared to face the cultural differences as well as differences in the governmental structure and how they view deaf/hard of hearing people," Joshua advises.

Because Joshua returned from France unexpectedly early, he was not in school during Fall 2000 and stayed with his parents in Virginia upon his return. He expects to graduate in May of 2002 or 2003, depending on his major. "I have not really decided what to major in," he says.

"Originally, I wanted to major in Business Administration with a track in Accounting, but I changed to French and Spanish. I am technically still in that major now, but I do predict a change soon. I want to choose a major that is practical and will bring me a high income. I am looking into Business again and even at Architecture, and I also know I'd like to be in the education field or the international field."

"At The University of Oklahoma," he adds, "I find the services for students with hearing impairments impressive. The interpreters are wonderful. I like most the high level of service that the Office of Students with Disabilities provides to their students."

"My advice to any deaf or hard of hearing students considering a postsecondary education would be to remind them that they will encounter a different world, one different than the protected, well-cushioned bubble of high school. There will be hard decisions to make. People will try to influence the decisions you make, and you must stand strong and stick with your goals. Be open-minded, and accept change in order to make yourself a better person. Strive for excellence, and do not settle for second best. Be positive about yourself and your future. You owe it to yourself to have the best possible life. You come before everyone else, and never forget that."

Joshua is at an exciting point in his life when he is considering many career possibilities. "There are so many things I am capable of," he says, "and it is interesting to explore many fields."

Jigar Patel

Jigar Patel was born in Bombay, Maharastra, India. "I was born with hearing," he states. "However, about one week later I lost my hearing. I had jaundice, and the doctors gave me a high dose of antibiotics."

Soon after that Jigar's family moved to a different city, Baroda, in the state of Gujarat. "My family members know Gujarati Sign Language, and that's what we used to communicate. My mom and dad co-founded a school for deaf individuals in Baroda." Jigar was admitted to the school at age five and stayed there for eight years. "I learned Gujarat, Math, Hindi, Art, and a little English there."

Jigar and his family moved to the United States in 1995. Initially, they lived in a northwest suburb of Chicago. "My father and uncle got me admitted to the John Hearsay High School. There were about thirty-five deaf and hard of hearing students at this mainstreamed high school," Jigar explains. "I was sort of scared in the beginning, because I was unfamiliar with the language and culture of this country. I picked up American Sign Language by myself through observation and with some help from my friends in school."

While attending high school, Jigar worked part-time. He also worked in the school library and helped develop notes for blind individuals. He graduated from high school in Fall 1999. He also attended NIU (**Northern Illinois University**) for a six week summer program.

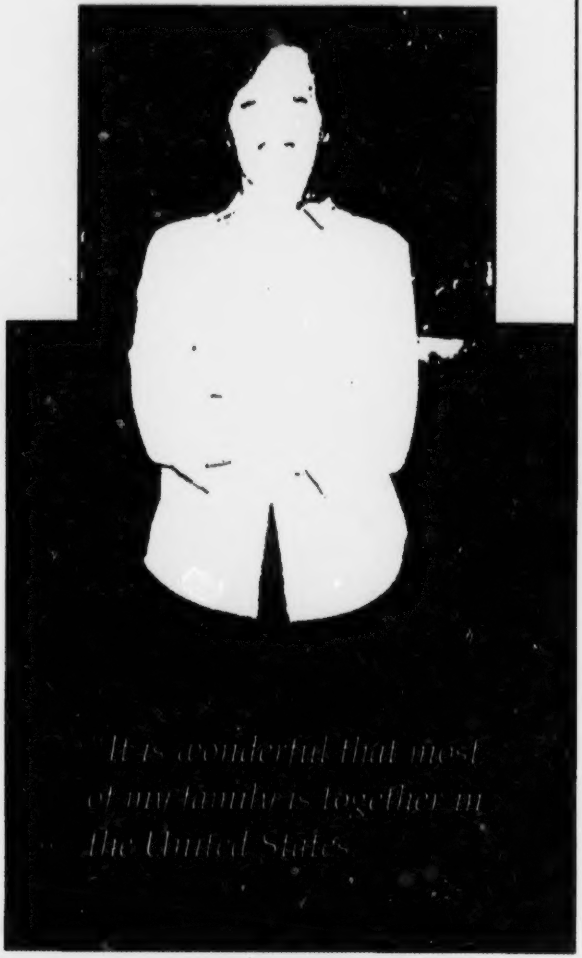
"Because my brother started his graduate studies at Georgia Tech, I moved with my family to Atlanta in the fall of 1999," he says. Jigar was soon attending classes at **Georgia Perimeter College**. He started school as a part-time student and full-time employee in a chemical lab. "As soon as I get a very strong command over English," he explains, "I'll put all of my efforts into school. I am studying hard, and in the future I want to work with computer programs."

Jigar has lots of advice for deaf and hard of hearing high school students considering postsecondary education. "Make sure you're committed to studying and are serious about educational achievements," he says. "Going to college doesn't just mean freedom from home. Finding a balance between school work and fun is a must. If you are really not sure if you want to go to college, go to work for a while until you decide what you want for your future. If you want to go to college but are undecided on a major, take some core classes and maybe a few courses will spark an interest for you and will help you decide on a major."

"Going to college doesn't just mean freedom from home. Finding a balance between school work and fun is a must."

Dora Rodila

Dora Rodila was born in Romania. She came to the United States in 1991 just after the fall of the communist government. Her younger hearing brother was already in the United States and told Dora to come here. "He felt there was a future for me in America," she says. "Living conditions were deteriorating in Romania at that time, and the unemployment rate was fifty percent. It was almost impossible for anyone to find work. It was even worse for a person who was deaf. The country did not provide a lot of support services for us." In fact, Dora explains, at that time there were not many opportunities in Romania for anyone with a disability.



"It is wonderful that most of my family is together in the United States."

Dora's mother and father have since come to the United States in order to be close to the rest of the family. She also has a second brother here in the States. Her brothers are married and have children as well. "It is wonderful that most of my family is together in the United States," Dora says.

Dora lost her hearing when she was ten months old. She merely had a cold, but doctors insisted that her mother keep her in the hospital. "There was a shortage of patients. The hospital needed to show the government that there were patients." The physicians gave Dora doses of Streptomycin, doses too high for an infant, and Dora almost died. "I was dying in my mother's arms," she explains, "and the doctors would not pay any attention to my mother's pleas." Finally, with the help of an ambulance driver, Dora's mother ran away from that hospital to a larger hospital in another city. After hours of intensive medical intervention, Dora's life was saved. The nerves in her ears were, however, completely destroyed.

"No one was ever charged with any crime for my suffering," Dora says. "It was impossible to do anything about it because of the government. Those doctors continued their practice, and they killed and destroyed many other lives."

At the age of four, Dora started school at an oral residential school. She attended high school at another residential school for an additional sixteen years. "At that school some sign language was used in the dorm, but the school emphasized oral communication," she explains. "The teachers communicated orally in the classroom, but in the dorms the students used sign language." At home Dora communicated with her family orally.

"Conditions in the schools in Romania were terrible, and students were not treated well," Dora says. Despite these conditions, Dora received a high school diploma. "Students who were deaf were not, however, permitted to attend college in Romania. They were required to train and then get a job," she explains. Dora trained for three years at a technical school and became a professional wood sculptor. She both sculpted and created decorative designs on furniture. Unfortunately, though, the economic conditions in Romania worsened, and Dora lost her job.

"In Romania, being a wood sculptor was okay, but I want something different in America," Dora shares. "I want to improve my English and see what opportunities become available to me." She is currently studying English, her fourth language, at **Georgia Perimeter College** (GPC). She is a serious English student who is very motivated and enjoys understanding and improving her English. Dora has an intense desire for people to understand her written English. She has learned American Sign Language, which she found very difficult and very different from the sign language used in Romania. She learned ASL from other people who are deaf at clubs and events and in her English class at GPC.

Dora has been working at a laboratory here in the U.S. for two years, a job that provides her with an income while she is going to school. "I am interested in psychology and helping people solve their problems," she says. Becoming a CDI (Certified Deaf Interpreter) is also something that interests Dora. She adds that she would enjoy being a part of the Shared Reading Program as well; reading to children who are deaf and encouraging them to learn to read is something she believes would bring her a lot of satisfaction.

Dora came to the United States for a better life. She is making the most of her opportunities in a new country. She is studying on a college campus, succeeding, and building a future.

Regena Williams

Regena Williams grew up in Bermuda, the only deaf child in a family of five children. She was born two months premature, and it was not until the age of two until her mother realized that her daughter was deaf.

Regena learned Signing Exact English (SEE) at the age of five from her teachers. "I didn't learn British Sign Language (BSL)," she explains, "but I wish I had learned that instead of SEE. Bermuda is dependent on England, and many deaf people want to use BSL, but they have not been taught." Regena's mother and grandmother are the only family members that know a little sign language. "I was not comfortable with my family using signs," she says. "I only sign to my deaf friends."

She attended Friendship Vale School in Bermuda where all her teachers, most from England, knew sign language. She then attended a mainstreamed high school for five years and used interpreters in the classroom.

After high school, Regena's mother encouraged her to go to college. "One year before I graduated," Regena shares, "I decided I wanted to do that, and I set my goals for college." For two years, Regena worked in order to save money to attend college. During this time, she also worked on her English skills so that she could improve her chances to get into the college of her choice.

She moved to Texas to attend **The Southwest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf** (SWCID) in Big Springs and started to learn American Sign Language." Moving to America was a major culture shock for me," she shares, "because America is extremely big compared to Bermuda. I wasn't used to signing every day either. But, I like America, because things are inexpensive here. During college, my friends thought I was rich, because I could buy many things cheap."

Regena found the services for deaf students in college, such as interpreters, notetakers, and tutors, extremely helpful. She received an Associate of Arts degree in General Studies from SWCID and transferred to **East Central University** (ECU) in Ada, Oklahoma. At ECU she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Counseling Services for the Deaf and her Master's degree in Human Services Administration.

Regena sets her goals high, always knowing that an education is valuable if a person wants to get a good job and make a difference. She has moved back to Bermuda and hopes to find a position working in Human Services Administration. She would rather work for the government, she says, than a private agency. "If I can't find a job or if I'm not satisfied, I plan to move back to England for two years," she says.

Regena hopes to "change the minds of hearing people about people who are deaf. I want hearing people to stop being so close-minded and to realize that deaf people can do anything hearing people can." Furthermore, she wants people in Bermuda to see that deaf people can succeed. "In Bermuda," she adds, "there are not many services for deaf people. There are no relay services or close-captioned movies. Even though the deaf population in Bermuda is small, those people need services."

"An education is valuable if a person wants to get a good job and make a difference!"

Students Making a Difference Through Education

Martha Causey

Martha Causey is a junior at **Southeastern University** in Hammond, Louisiana, studying Elementary Education. She has been severely deaf since birth.

She graduated from Central High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1974. "I was accepted," she says, "into **Louisiana Tech University**, and I did not do well. The next semester I transferred to **Nicholls State University** in Thibodaux, Louisiana, and I did a little better but not well enough to feel confident to continue." Martha explains that—at that time—her professors were generally neither helpful nor understanding towards her as a student.

Years later in August of 1998, Martha re-entered college after she went to Vocational Rehabilitation and learned that accommodations were provided "through the Disability Act," she says, "for people like me. I was fearful and full of anxiety when I met with Dr. Williams at Southeastern. She spoke words of wisdom and encouragement, though, that helped build my confidence to go back to college."

Martha Causey (right) with her sister Lisa Chase

> *"I encourage deaf students to seek challenges in order to better themselves with a college education."*

Martha describes her experiences at Southeastern as trying, exciting, and very challenging. "I am excited, because I feel I am achieving for myself what I did not think twenty-five years ago that I could do. I am nervous and anxious when I enter a new class, and I am afraid of the unknown. But, my college educational challenges are making me stronger and more confident in myself daily and each semester. I have achieved much higher grades than I did twenty-five years ago, and I am SARTE status now, meaning I can take all my major education classes and become prepared for my 'professional knowledge' exam before I graduate." Martha is very much looking forward to graduating with a degree in Education, and she is excited about future opportunities to apply what she has learned and become a great teacher.

"At Southeastern," she says, "I have not allowed my deafness to stop me from getting an education. I encourage deaf students to seek challenges in order to better themselves with a college education." Martha advises students to not be shy or afraid to ask for help while getting an education. "Communicate well with your professors, and make friends with your colleagues. I also encourage universities to better interact with their clients. For example, hold monthly group meetings, and hold professors accountable for teaching students the material."

Martha thanks Dr. Williams for supporting her during her college experience.

Lisa Chase

"I am very thankful for the Americans with Disabilities Act that strongly advises all public colleges to accommodate people with disabilities," says Lisa Chase. "I am thankful that Louisiana State University (LSU) has provided me an education so that I can achieve to my best ability, and I am grateful that LSU has a disability services Coordinator that understands Deaf Culture and meets the needs of each student. I want to commend LSU for providing these services."

Lisa has been deaf since she was an infant. She attended the Louisiana School for the Deaf most of her life but also attended classes in the public school system for three years. "I was in a normal classroom setting without an interpreter," she says, "and I struggled to lipread the teachers all day. I could not function well. I had to work and study extra hard in order to pass those classes." Lisa decided to go back to the school for the deaf. "I had felt isolated from hearing friends in the public school system and also became tired of having to struggle to read lips all day," she says. "I felt that I would function better using sign language as my mode of communication and being around other people that were like me. I was happy after going back to the deaf school, and I remained there until after I completed the tenth grade."

Lisa married at the age of sixteen. She graduated with a GED from the public school system after being married for fourteen months.

"I then worked different jobs. I was a paraprofessional (teacher's aide), distribution clerk (post office clerk), mail clerk, typist clerk, editorial assistant, and computer clerk. I worked mostly for the government. I taught sign language in the community, and that's when I decided I wanted to go to college. I had never been in college and wanted that experience."

Lisa decided to apply for vocational rehabilitation. She had been out of school for twenty years, so she took a placement test at **Delgado Community College** and discovered that she had to take remedial English and Math. "I enhanced my skills tremendously at Delgado," she adds. "I learned so much and had some very fine interpreters that really made a difference for me in my competency as a student. I could not have done as well without them." Lisa is grateful that she was able to attend a "normal college" that accommodated deaf students. She majored in Early Childhood Education and was the only deaf student in this major. "My teaching supervisor had never had a deaf student do a practicum at a deaf school!"

Lisa graduated with honors with a 3.57 GPA. She is a lifetime member of Phi Theta Kappa and was told that she was the first deaf student at Delgado to both graduate with honors and make Phi Theta Kappa.

"We can do anything when we strive to work for it."

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After graduating from Delgado, she transferred to **Louisiana State University** (LSU) and has been at LSU for over a year. "I love the challenge of learning," she says, "and I really love how the disability services office provides me with whatever suits me in the classroom setting. I am able to have an interpreter or a captionist." Lisa chose LSU for its disability services office; getting the services she needs is her first priority in order to function well in school. "I can't excel without being accommodated with an interpreter. I am grateful that LSU provides a variety of services. I commend Jennie Bourgeois for an excellent service. She deserves such loud applause for her work!"

Lisa's experience at LSU has been a challenge, but she enjoys learning. She is still majoring in Elementary Education and has accumulated over one hundred and twenty hours with a GPA of 3.44.

Lisa is involved in many community services. She serves as a deaf volunteer hospice worker at Hospice of Baton Rouge; she is a Governor-appointed member of Early Identification of Infants and Newborns; she is a member of Deaf Women of Baton Rouge, the Baton Rouge Association of the Deaf, the Louisiana Association of the Deaf (LAD), the Registry Interpreters for the Deaf, and First Baptist Deaf Church; she performs solo in sign language at her church; she is a Sunday school teacher, deaf-blind interpreter coordinator, and volunteer at her deaf church; and, she serves as a Big Sister to a deaf girl in the Big Sister/Little Sister program.

Her past community services include: Secretary for LAD, junior board member for LAD, Secretary for Greater New Orleans Association of the Deaf, volunteer for different deaf organizations, queen for Krewe of Dauphine (deaf ball), support services provider for individuals who are deaf-blind in New Orleans, and member of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, Division #33.

She was also recognized as being the Handicapped Employee of the Year by the Department of Defense. Lisa is also a certified deaf interpreter for the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

"My advice to deaf and hard of hearing students," Lisa says, "is to never say 'I can't do it!' We can do anything when we strive to work for it. I would advise older adults to go back to school and learn. It is the greatest thing to learn new things and share it with others."

Cherri Duhon

Cherri Duhon refuses to give up. "I have a goal and will not let anything crash my goal," she says." I would advise younger students to not let anything change their dream. Work hard, and dreams will come true."

Cherri has been deaf since birth. In high school, she was very involved in extracurricular activities. She was chosen to attend Girls State, "which is a wonderful experience for anyone," she says. "I was the only deaf person to ever complete Girls State. It was a great experience for me." Cherri also served on the staff for the school year book. "I had some struggles in high school," she states, "but I also learned a lot from all the different activities I was involved in."

Presently, Cherri is attending **The University of Louisiana at Lafayette**. "I am working toward an Elementary Education major, but I kept getting blocked from finishing this major because of the NTE (National Teacher Exam). I have received tutoring to help me prepare for the exam, but I feel that the tutoring I have received is not specific to my needs. All tutoring is geared for hearing students, and I need specific help for my disability of deafness so that I can understand."

Cherri attended a weekend workshop but still felt left out, as she needed more focus on English. "I have felt so frustrated all year, and I don't have any more courses left. I am now stuck, and I have no choice but to change to General Studies, which I really don't want. College has had so many obstacles for me. I have experienced lots of struggles and frustrations."

However, Cherri is persistent. "You may struggle at the beginning, but success will come at the end," she believes.

"Work hard, and dreams will come true."

Jean Eichelberger

Recalling the words of I. King Jordan of Gallaudet University, Jean Eichelberger encourages students that are hard of hearing or deaf to follow their dreams: "You can do anything but hear." Jean adds: "Go for it! Don't be lazy. Don't wait until you become older. Start working toward your career while you are young."

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Jean was born hard of hearing. She was also born prematurely and was not diagnosed with a hearing loss until the age of two. In addition, she was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at that time. Jean's mother knew she had a disability but could not get a proper diagnosis until she took her to Johns Hopkins.

Jean went to public school and was in Special Education Classes. In 1971, her family moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. Jean worked as a teacher assistant in preschool for two years. Later, she attended **St. Petersburg Junior College**. She graduated from **Mirror Lake Community College**, having studied floral arranging, and she owned a florist business and provided floral arrangements for more than five hundred weddings, funerals, and other activities. Jean was invited to the White House to visit their floral arranging department during former President Carter's term. "I thoroughly enjoyed that visit," she shares.

"Go for it! Don't be lazy . . . Start working toward your career while you are young."

Later, deciding to return to college, Jean attended **Hillsborough Community College** to become an interpreter. She had a 3.0 GPA but was unable to continue her major because of her hearing loss. In 1995, she enrolled in **Gallaudet University**. She wanted to learn more about Deaf Culture and improve her sign language skills. During the two years she attended the University, she had a 3.57 GPA. She made friends with many students there and continues to keep in touch with them through e-mail.

Jean moved back to Florida in 1998 to help her mother care for her ailing father. While attending **The University of South Florida**, she learned about the Deaf Education Program at **Converse College**. Jean and her family moved to Spartanburg in September 2000, and she enrolled at Converse College as a part-time student and plans to become a full-time student soon.

Jean's goal is to become an elementary teacher at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind. She is a junior and is looking forward to a new career and working with children. When asked what she liked about the colleges she has attended, she applauds Gallaudet for the computer skills she learned while attending. "The University of South Florida," she adds, "had wonderful advisors. Converse College has an outstanding Deaf Education Program."

In her free time, Jean enjoys studying and keeping in touch with her deaf friends through e-mail. An animal lover and advocate for her animal friends, she has found homes for thirty-two stray kittens for "Save our Strays" while living in Florida. She has two Cocker Spaniels, a cat, and a bird. She had a Cocker Spaniel that she taught sign language and entered in dog shows. She wants to become a volunteer at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind.

Christopher Flint Fears

Christopher Flint Fears strongly believes in encouraging all students who are deaf to be anything they dream to be. "Don't let anyone ever tell you that you can't," he says. "You have to undo the *can't* to *can*. Once you fix the can't, you will be able to do anything you want to do. If you look for the answer, follow your heart, because your heart has your answer. Deaf is *beautiful*, and you should be proud of who you are!"

Christopher was born deaf. The rest of his family, with the exception of his sister, is hearing. He attended the Arkansas School for the Deaf for his primary and secondary education and graduated in 1993. After high school, he attended **Gallaudet University** in Washington, D.C. He majored in Psychology and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1998.

While a student at Gallaudet, Christopher worked as a residential advisor, was involved in Class of '97 activities, worked for the Student Body Government as Student Affairs Director, was a student assistant for the Office of the President, and was involved in various other volunteer services. Christopher was also a member of Alpha Sigma Pi. He worked as Activities Director at Camp Endeavor, a summer camp for young, deaf children, in Dundee, Florida, for two years as well.

After graduating from Gallaudet, Christopher considered becoming a school counselor, but a friend, Jessica Courtright, encouraged him to go into teaching. He finally decided to invest in the education of young, deaf students. "I had been frustrated," he says, " by the lack of deaf adult role models for deaf students, especially in the field of education." Christopher knew he wanted to work closely with children.

He was led back to his hometown to pursue a Master's degree in Deaf Education at **The University of Arkansas at Little Rock** (UALR) because of this strong commitment to the education of deaf people. He studied full-time and eventually received the National Education Award and the Excellence Award at UALR. During his graduate studies, he worked as a student assistant for the University's Disability Support Services. He was also a peer advisor for deaf and hard of hearing students and helped them plan and implement their first year studies at UALR. During his course work, Christopher did his practicum at the Arkansas School for the Deaf. He also did a practicum at the Otter Creek Elementary School for Summer Reading. In the spring of 2000, he finished his student internship at the Arizona School for the Deaf in Tucson, having taught in the middle and elementary schools for fifteen weeks.

"Deaf is beautiful, and you should be proud of who you are!"

Christopher's experience as a co-chaperone for Pee Wee Jr. National Association of the Deaf, helping elementary students build their leadership skills, was so rewarding that he decided to return to the Arizona School for the Deaf to become a teacher for a self-contained class for the 2000-2001 school year. He is proud to say that his hard work has paid off. "Ever since I started my teaching career," he shares, "I have wanted to challenge deaf children and encourage them to reach for their dreams. I enjoy working with students outside of my work hours and joining them in extracurricular activities," he adds.

Ella Irby

"After you graduate, go to college, study hard, go to class every day, and be the best you can be."

Ella Irby, a strong role model for the black deaf community, was born hearing in Sherrill, Arkansas, but became deaf at the age of nine from scarlet fever. She spent four years of her life in a hearing elementary school in Wabbaseka Public Schools, but after the onset of deafness, she became a student at the Madison School for Black Deaf Students in Little Rock, Arkansas. "The teachers did not sign," Ella shares, "but the other students taught me." Eventually, Ella received her GED.

Several years later, Ella became a full-time student at **The University of Arkansas at Little Rock** (UALR), where she received her Associate of Arts in General Studies. During her years at UALR, Ella was an active member in several clubs and organizations, which included UALR Deaf Trojans, Sigma Lambda Kappa, the sign language club at UALR, and Little Rock Black Deaf Advocates for which Ella served as president for five years. She is currently serving as their Chapter Representative.

Ella worked for Timex for ten years, at Deaf Access as a Peer Partner, and as a specialist dormitory house parent for fifteen years. She also attended the National Black Deaf Advocates midterm meeting at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. in March 1999 and attended the National Black Deaf Conference in Jamaica in August 1999.

She has three children, and all of them use American Sign Language.

Ella is now working toward getting her Bachelor of Arts degree at UALR. She also works as a lab assistant in the Interpreter Education Program, tutoring and serving as a sign language model for students in the program.

Having worked hard in her postsecondary career, Ella understands the rewards of a postsecondary degree. "My advice to high school students who are deaf is that after you graduate, you should go to college, study hard, go to class everyday, and be the best you can be."

April Kirby

"I have overcome a lot of barriers while pursuing my dream field," shares April Kirby, "which is teaching for the deaf. I feel that deaf students need a role model and someone willing to teach them, someone who will not put up barriers."

April currently lives in Knoxville, Tennessee. Her family assumes she was born deaf; her parents were not aware that she was deaf until the age of two. She attended the Tennessee School for the Deaf (TSD) for her elementary and secondary education and graduated in 1991.

After high school, April went to **Chattanooga State Community College** in Chattanooga, Tennessee, for two years and then transferred to **Gallaudet University** in Washington, D.C. She majored in Psychology and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1996. While at Gallaudet, April was a residential advisor for two years. She was also a member of Delta Phi Epsilon.

After graduating from Gallaudet, April knew she wanted to pursue a degree in Educational Psychology. She chose **The University of Tennessee,** because it was less expensive to attend a local university instead of opting for an out-of-state school, and April knew that her vocational rehabilitation counselor would not be able to provide support during her graduate studies. April received her Master of Science in 1998. She then worked for two and a half years at TSD as a supervisor of the Alternative Program Cottage. Currently, April is working at The University of Tennessee as Outreach Specialist for the Postsecondary Education Consortium. She is also studying part-time for her second Master's degree in Deaf Education.

This past year April battled cancer, but "I did not give up," she adds. "I continued with full-time school and work. I have completed chemotherapy and radiation. I am now healthy and doing well."

April enjoys spending time with her friends and family. She also enjoys camping, hiking, and mountain biking. April's new dream is to volunteer her time in supporting other deaf women, especially those who have been diagnosed with cancer.

"I want to challenge deaf youngsters to pursue their dreams, even if they've been told that they cannot," April says. "Go after your dreams, and do not let anything stop you! Fight for your dreams, no matter what they are for—your life, your family, your education, or your career."

"I want to challenge deaf youngsters to pursue their dreams, even if they've been told that they cannot."

Martha Knowles

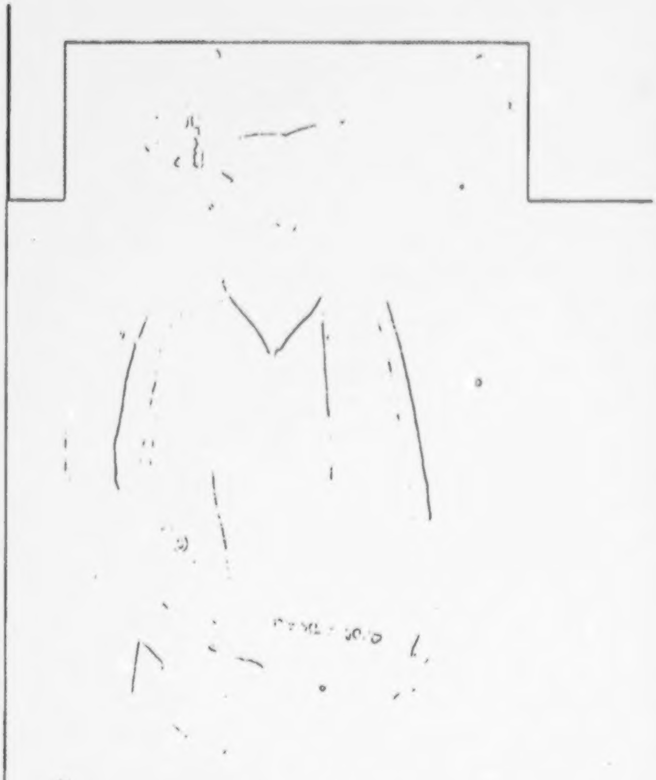
Martha Knowles, who lives in Orlando, Florida, encourages high school students who are deaf to do the best they can to master reading and writing English. "Do take ESL (English as a Second Language) classes if you can," she says. "ASL is the natural language of many deaf individuals and is a wonderful language, but—unfortunately—we live in a hearing world and an English-speaking country where in order to succeed at all, we must be able to read and write fluently in English."

Martha places a great deal of importance on education. "I believe that the greatest hindrance to a child's educational achievement is not whether there is a disability but whether that child has the proper opportunities to learn," she shares.

Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, she had normal hearing but became profoundly deaf at age seven from encephalitis. "My mom said I was a chatterbox until I became deaf and that then I became a bookworm!" Martha shares. "My love of reading has become a valuable asset not only academically but in many other areas of my life."

After Martha became deaf, her parents enrolled her in an oral school, but her hearing loss was so severe that after one semester her teacher advised that she be transferred to the Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD) where sign language is incorporated into instruction. Martha attended ISD from January 1961 to May 1968. While at ISD, where total communication was used, Martha was encouraged to continue using her speech skills but was also encouraged to learn sign language.

"I now sign using a mixture of about twenty-five percent ASL and seventy-five percent English," says Martha. By the following Fall, her family had moved to south central Indiana, and Martha transferred to a public high school in that area. "This was before IDEA and ADA laws, so I had no interpreters or notetakers in classes," she adds. "It was not easy. I often had to check with teachers or classmates to make sure I got all of my assignments. But I did it, graduating in May 1971, twelfth out of thirty-seven students, and the only deaf student there!" Martha's Vocational Rehabilitation counselors talked with her about attending Gallaudet University, but—though Martha was interested in college—she was not ready to go just then.



"The greatest hindrance to a child's educational achievement is not whether there is a disability but whether that child has the proper opportunities to learn."

In 1972 she moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, and held various jobs until 1976 when she got a job with the United States Postal Service (USPS) and worked there until late 1991. "I still hoped to go to college but was unsure of what to choose as a major," she says. "In 1988 while working at USPS and also working part-time in my church office, I took two classes at **Louisiana State University** but found it all too much, and after one semester I put college on hold again. A couple of years later we moved to Orlando to help care for my aging mother-in-law until she passed away in 1995. The following year my father passed away. After my youngest stepson graduated from high school, my husband encouraged me (twenty-six years after my high school graduation) to enroll at **Valencia Community College** (VCC) in August 1997."

Martha states that—for several reasons—she had already developed an interest in the field of Education. "I had noticed that many deaf high school graduates had trouble with reading and writing, and I wondered why. I had wanted to help my stepson, who had struggled through his school years with a learning disability, but I didn't know how." Martha became friends with an interpreter who happened to be a learning disabilities therapist. By Fall 1998 she had decided that she wanted to work with deaf students who had learning disabilities and chose Elementary Education as her major, taking electives in Exceptional Education and focusing on learning disabilities.

"While attending Valencia Community College, I had access to notetakers and excellent interpreters. Preparation time with interpreters and/or tutors was also available, but because I already had good study skills, enjoyed reading, and had above average English skills, I rarely needed those services. I was honored to be the first deaf student to enter VCC's Honors Program." Martha also became an active member of the Phi Theta Kappa Society (PTK) and the American Sign Language (ASL) Club, earning several PTK awards for volunteer work. She was selected to be in the 1998-99 "Who's Who In American Junior Colleges" as well as on the National Dean's List. She received an Associate of Arts degree from VCC in December 1999, and her high grade point average earned her the privilege of wearing a red stole in addition to her gold PTK and Honors stoles at commencement ceremonies.

Martha is currently a Junior in **The University of Central Florida's (UCF) College of Education** and was recently inducted into the Kappa Delta Pi Society. "Because both VCC and UCF share the same team of interpreters, I continue to benefit from their valuable skills and services," she says.

After completing her BS in Elementary Education at UCF, Martha hopes to earn a MA degree in Deaf Education at a Florida university and to eventually work with deaf students in central Florida.

Chad Ruffin

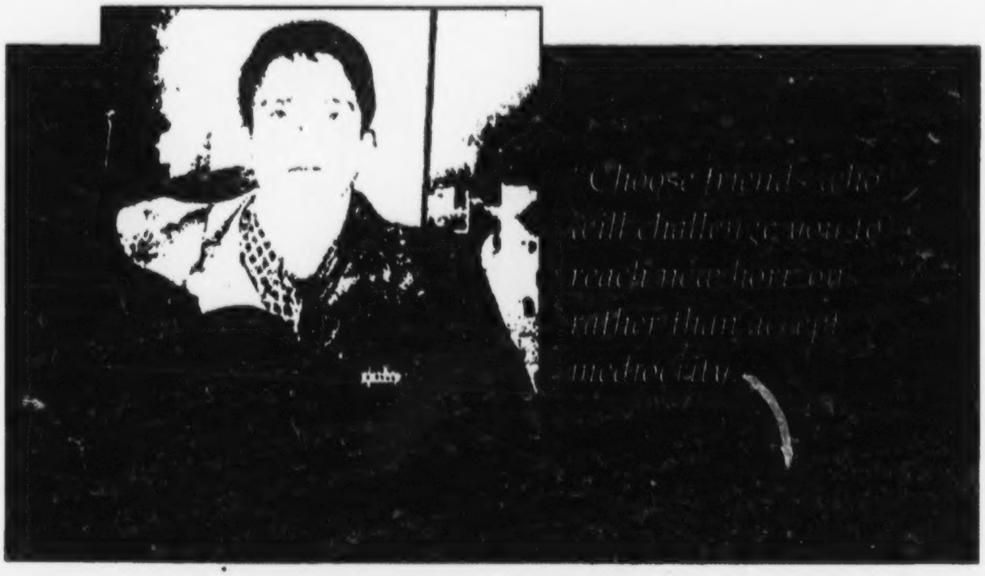
Chad Ruffin describes most of his life as an "oral deaf person" as being very lonely. "I became tired of it," he shares. "Three and a half years of my life as a student at **Centenary College of Louisiana** had gone by, and—though I did well academically as a mainstreamed student—I had no stable social life to speak of. Being isolated from both my hearing and deaf counterparts, I was afforded little social interaction, and—as a result—I was highly frustrated."

Chad opted for a cochlear implant in February 1999. "Though I was told to keep expectations low," he says, "my hopes were nearly shattered when the implant was 'activated.' Voices sounded like birds, syllables were tough to discriminate, and sounds I was receiving were inordinately loud. Even worse, the actual 'hearing' was initially a felt sensation. Some of the most important words in my life came at this time: 'hang in there.' 'Hang in there' I did." Over the weeks—with subsequent programming sessions—Chad's hearing gradually improved. "I flew through the initial take-home exercises and slaved through 25 hours of summer auditory therapy," he shares.

The effort paid off. When school started the following fall, Chad was able to participate in group discussions as opposed to the one-on-one conversations to which he was previously limited. "With my improved hearing, my social life took off. I had more friends and was finally beginning to find a niche on campus," he says. "My 'breakthrough' came six months to the day of my implantation. I was able to listen to a college lecture without taking notes, and I was barely able to contain myself!"

"Now I have come full circle," Chad says. He describes the experiences he had in the previous year as "incredible." He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Biology and proudly joined the faculty at Logansport High School for the 2000-01 school year. With great anticipation, he looks forward to what life will bring him and the future he will make of it.

Chad encourages all readers, especially those who are deaf, to follow the advice of Winston Churchill: Never give up. "Give your weakness strength," he says, "and learn as much as you can about the communication between hearing persons. Do not be afraid to speak up for your needs. Give your absolute best in college, and form close relationships with your professors, and choose friends who will challenge you to reach new horizons rather than accept mediocrity. In short, make lemonade out of those lemons and give your best. Hard work always pays off!"



"Choose friends who will challenge you to reach new horizons rather than accept mediocrity."

Justine Turner

Justine Turner believes strongly in the power of education. "I encourage deaf and hard of hearing children to get a good education and good literacy skills" she says. "After receiving an education at the secondary level, deaf and hard of hearing students need to use their literacy skills to get into college or to get a job in the real world."

Justine's family discovered that she was deaf when she was sixteen months old. She attended the Tennessee School for the Deaf (TSD) from age three until her graduation in May 1994. There she was taught by instructors using Pidgin Signed English.

Currently, Justine is a Youth Service Worker at TSD. "Because I was a student at TSD," she says, "I want to experience what it is like to work with the children there. I also want to develop my leadership skills and be a good role model for deaf and hard of hearing children."

In 1994, Justine started attending classes at **Pellissippi State Technical Community College** (PSTCC). "I got an academic scholarship," she explains, "and studied there for two years. As a full-time student at PSTCC, I was undecided about my major, so I took courses in General Studies." In the Spring of 1996, Justine decided to major in American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Studies. "I searched programs for ASL/Deaf Studies at different colleges and universities, and then I received some information about **Maryville College**. I then decided to transfer to Maryville to pursue my Bachelor's in ASL/Deaf Studies."

Justine received two academic scholarships to attend Maryville College. While a student, Justine was involved in Intervarsity, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Sigma Lambda Kappa, the Sign Language Club. She also worked as a Resident Assistant, an ASL tutor for the Maryville College Study Tables, and a Teacher Assistant for the Upward Bound Program during the Summer of 1998. She was listed twice on the Dean's List and graduated from Maryville College with her Bachelor of Arts degree in June 1999.

"I want deaf and hard of hearing children to receive a good education."

"College was a real challenge for me," Justine shares. "I was lucky in that I was provided an interpreter, tutor, and notetakers. I was also able to take tests with extended time in the Learning Center. Maryville College is not PEC-affiliated, but the Learning Center there met the needs of students like me."

When she has the time, Justine enjoys reading biographies, autobiographies, Christian books, and books about Deaf heritage. "I also enjoy watching football, hanging out with my good friends, and crafts, such as cross-stitching and crocheting," she adds. Since 1994, Justine has also been involved with the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Association of the Deaf.

Addressing the issue of technology today, Justine remembers that at TSD she learned to read and write manually without the aid of a computer. "During my teenage years," she says, "I tried to learn how to use the computer, and it really frustrated me, because it was really complex and difficult to comprehend. Finally, at Maryville College I took some computer science classes, and they really helped me. I finally understood the computer system and how to use Microsoft Word or Works for my term papers, research papers, and classes. My documents were well-organized on the computer, and it really benefited me. There is so much technology out there, and we will have to use the computer for so many different things in the business world."

Justine is planning to attend graduate school to study for her Master's degree in Deaf Education. "I want deaf and hard of hearing children to receive a good education," she says.

Reinaldo J. Vega

"If you work hard," says Reinaldo J. Vega, "and do the best you can, not letting deafness get in your way, you can accomplish anything in your life." Reinaldo, who prefers to be called Rey, is profoundly deaf. He was born and raised in West Palm Beach, Florida, and now lives in Kissimmee.

His parents found out that he was deaf when he was about two years old, and the cause of his deafness is unknown. "I first learned sign language at about the age of four," he says, "when a teacher from the public school system's pre-K Program for the Deaf came to my family's home to work with me before I started elementary school."

In elementary school, Rey was in classes with other deaf children most of the day. He also received speech therapy, which included lipreading and speech and auditory training. When he was in the fifth grade, he was declared gifted and started taking advanced classes offered within the Gifted Program.

In middle school, Rey attended mainstreamed classes alone half of the day with no interpreters. "During those times," he says," I depended on the teacher to write on the board, or I borrowed notes from the teacher or a classmate. The rest of the day I went to the deaf classes." By the time Rey reached high school, he was nearly fully mainstreamed alone with an interpreter. "I took advanced Math and Science classes and graduated third in a class of over four hundred students," he shares.

Rey then decided to attend the **Rochester Institute of Technology** (RIT) for four years to get his Bachelor's degree in Applied Mathematics. "It was my first time outside of Florida," he says. "I graduated with Honors."

After completing school, Rey went to Florida to work at the Motorola Paging Company in Boynton Beach and also became a substitute teacher. He later went back to **The University of North Florida** to get his Master's degree in Deaf Education and his teaching certificates in Mathematics (6–12) and Hearing Impaired (K–12).

"If you work hard and do the best you can, not letting deafness get in your way, you can accomplish anything in your life."

In September 1997, Rey applied for a teaching position as a teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing at St. Cloud High School. "I have been there ever since!" he states." Currently, I have eleven students, grades nine to twelve. I am also the President of the Deaf Experience Association, Inc., which is a nonprofit community organization that serves the deaf/hard of hearing community as well as the general community in the Central Florida area. Our goal is to function as a deaf service center with services that include client assistance, advocacy, and community outreach."

Even though Rey is profoundly deaf, he has been wearing both hearing aids since childhood. These enable him, he explains, to hear certain sounds and voices but without clarification. "As for other technologies," he adds, "I have found e-mail and the Internet very helpful, as they help me to maintain communication with both deaf and hearing people at work, home, and in the community. I would not be able to communicate as comfortably without these technologies. I also have used the TTY since late in elementary school. Not only does it allow for communication, but it also helps improve my typing and written communication skills, skills that I stress to my students these days."

Rey believes that technology today has it pros and cons. "Deaf people have become more dependent on technology, and it makes them stay home more and lose more actual, physical contact with the deaf community/deaf culture and what's out there in the real world," he says. "On the other hand, we have relied on such technology designed for the deaf to make our lives more convenient and independent."

Michelle Weaver

Michelle Weaver teaches at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf (AASD) in Clarkston, Georgia. She gets a great deal of satisfaction out of teaching and has faced many challenges. "Even though I work with children who are like me, their limited abilities are way beyond belief for me," she says. "It was amazing to find that they do not have the opportunities and family support that I had."

Michelle is motivated to find ways to give her students the opportunities in life that they deserve. "AASD gave me the opportunity to teach three different kinds of classes during my first year of teaching. It was a rough but good experience. I discovered my weaknesses as a teacher," she shares. "Once I discovered them, I worked twice as hard. I always thought that being a teacher would be an easy job, but now I know it is not. I feel more responsibility to make sure that my students learn what I teach them." Michelle feels inclined to give her students more work, but most of the work they have now, she says, is not finished due to lack of parental support or encouragement. "It saddens me, but I will always try my best." She is currently teaching students with behavior problems and has discovered that behavior difficulties interfere with learning abilities, despite the student's intelligence level.

Michelle's family discovered that she was deaf at the age of three. She attended an oral school for the deaf in Jamaica and learned to speak through an early intervention program. She then attended oral schools in Florida, including the Fort Lauderdale Oral School, St. Jerome's Catholic School, and Nova High School of Nova University in Sunrise. She received constant speech therapy and

"I want [my students] to see that they can accomplish anything they desire."

remediation as a student. At Griffin High School, she used lipreading in all of her courses and graduated with honors.

Michelle received her Bachelor of Science in Finance and Bachelor of Arts in Deaf Education at **Jacksonville State University** (JSU). "Originally," she says, "I wanted to major in Statistics, but this university did not have that program. I decided to major in Accounting, because I have always loved helping my mother with accounting." After struggling with those courses, however, Michelle decided to switch to Finance. She then decided to go back to school to major in Deaf Education after having worked in a dormitory for two years. She knew that she wanted to give deaf students the same opportunities that she had in the past, and she wanted to serve as a good role model for future students. "I want them to see that they can accomplish anything they desire," she says.

As a student at JSU, Michelle received a great deal of friendly support from Disability Student Services (DSS). Through DSS, she secured interpreters for all of her classes. "They provided for all my needs," she states. "If it were not for them, I would have missed out on a lot." She heard about their program from her guidance counselor in high school. "I knew," she says, "that it was really important that I have that kind of support." Speaking of college in general, she adds, "having come from a sheltered world, I thought it would be a place where I could start a new life and meet new friends who were just like me."

While a student at JSU, Michelle benefited greatly from the technology available to her, such as e-mail, Internet access, and computers in general. "The computer and typing skills I learned in the classroom actually enhanced my job of today," she says. "If it were not for those courses, I would have to go back to school and learn how to use a computer." She is grateful for the Excel and PowerPoint skills she learned while in college. "I think all of these skills should be a requirement for a student's general core, since almost every company is depending on technology these days. At my job, we use e-mail, look for information or ways to teach the kids through the Internet, and type work sheets on the computer on a daily basis." Of course, Michelle is grateful for her hearing aids, teletypewriter, and alarm signals as well.

In her free time, Michelle enjoys reading, walking, and roller blading. "I am currently not really involved in the community, since I just moved to Atlanta this year," she says. "Hopefully, in a few months time, I will be volunteering in some kind of organization." Michelle also enjoys spending time with her two beautiful daughters "who want to grow up to be like me!" she adds. "They love learning and reading, and I try to set those good examples for them."

Since Michelle changed majors to finally discover in which field she wanted to work, she advises high school students who are deaf to work at various jobs before deciding on a major. "Deaf youth," she says, "need to explore and find out what communication skills are required from different companies. Don't get me wrong. There are many opportunities, and we all need to overcome obstacles. I wanted to work in a bank. However, there was a communication barrier. Even though I can read lips and talk all right, it was hard for me to communicate clearly and effectively with people that I did not know."

Michelle also encourages students to truly consider college in order to ensure that is what they really want to do. "[College] is not the way to get out of a sheltered world," she says. "Deaf people going to college have to work twice as hard as hearing students." Michelle also believes that students who are deaf and taking college prepatory courses should not be ashamed. "Those courses will help you prepare better for college."

Michelle is looking forward to her future plans. "I want to go back to school for my Master's in Business Administration, even though I am not planning on becoming a principal," she says. "I also hope to be involved in a committee for a program that addresses deaf issues." For her distant future, Michelle simply looks forward to retiring and—after her girls are grown—traveling the world (with a little cross-stitching included as well!).

Bonnie Wicks

"Always have a yearning for learning!"

Bonnie Wicks lives in Gainesville, Florida, and currently works in her husband's business. Her past job experiences range from volunteer work to delivery work to working as an American Sign Language teacher's aide.

She was born deaf, and her parents and mother's sister are deaf as well. She has hearing siblings and two deaf cousins. "My mother, aunt, and I all went to the same school and had the same teacher and bus driver," she shares. "The bus driver must have been at least seventy-five years old by the time I went there!"

Bonnie attended public school as a kindergartner and first grader. "When I was in first grade," she says, "the teacher was concerned about me, because I was not paying attention. I only liked to read and did not like doing other subjects." Her teacher reported this to the office. The office staff told Bonnie's parents that the only way they would keep Bonnie at the school was if she wore hearing aids. "My parents could not afford them at that time," she explains. "So, the school required my parents to send me to another school where they had deaf and hard of hearing children. I went there when I was seven years old. The school had all kinds of handicapped children along with non-handicapped children. This was 1960, and it wasn't like mainstream education is now."

Bonnie attended a school in New York that only tolerated the oralism method of teaching deaf and hard of hearing children. "It was frustrating for many of the deaf children to learn how to speak. We were not allowed to use our hands or gestures to talk. But," Bonnie adds, "when we went out for recess, we would communicate with some form of 'homemade' signing and gestures." She also received speech lessons. "It wasn't too bad for me, because I could read lips well, and it made it a lot easier for the speech teacher to teach me."

When Bonnie entered Clary Junior High School in Syracuse, it was a scary experience for her; she was the only deaf student in all of her classes. "I had to remind the teachers that they had to stay in front of the class so that I could read their lips," she explains. "Sometimes one of the teachers would forget that and would walk all around the room. I had to turn my head around the room like the girl in 'The Exorcist' just so I could keep reading her lips!"

When she switched to Corcoran High School in Syracuse, learning was not as much of a struggle. Bonnie explains that she would teach herself whenever she couldn't understand what her teachers had said in the classroom. "I just read and did my work at home. It was like having a longer school day for me." Bonnie graduated from Corcoran High in 1972.

Bonnie always wanted to go to college and was not satisfied with her previous education. In September of 1997, she attended **Santa Fe Community College** to study in the Medical Records Specialist program. "I had never had an interpreter for my classes before," she explains, "and someone told me that I ought to have one so I could have a complete understanding of the instructors' lectures. I was used to being independent through reading lips and using my hearing aids." Eventually, Bonnie agreed to secure interpreters for her classes, and it helped her a great deal. "I didn't realize how much information I could receive through the help of my interpreters." Bonnie found the Medical Terminology, Anatomy and Physiology, Principles of Disease, and Medical Coding classes very challenging, but her love of reading benefited her. She made the

Dean's list and graduated on April 28, 1999, receiving a Medical Records Coding certification.

When Bonnie moved to St. Petersburg, she was asked if she wanted to attend a sign language class at a St. Petersburg school. She agreed to go. "I learned more signing," she says, "and ended up being a teacher's aide there for about a year and a half."

Bonnie's preferred mode of communication is oral, as that is what she was taught growing up. Her parents always used American Sign Language, but they only signed to each other and to their deaf friends. Her parents lipread Bonnie and her siblings and used gestures with them as well. "My father would pretend that he was hearing when we went out so that people would not think of us as 'dumb.'" Bonnie believes that her natural language is sign language. "My speech is a trained speech, so that means it is a learned speech, which is not my natural language. I can read lips very well, sign and read sign language well, and speak well. I can communicate with both the hearing and the deaf," she says.

Bonnie enjoys reading, working out, traveling, swimming, and fishing in her spare time. She also enjoys spending time with her husband to whom she has been married for almost thirty years. They have four children—"all grown up and out of the house," she adds—and a sixteen-month old granddaughter.

Although Bonnie is not presently working in the medical field, she is pleased to have an education. "It is good to know that I have a 'safety net' should my husband's business slow down," she believes. She hopes to get a medical coding job and teach sign language as well. "I want to help the Florida education system," she says, "and help improve education for the deaf and hard of hearing."

Bonnie has a great deal of advice for young deaf and hard of hearing students. "Don't let your hearing loss be a handicap to you," she says. "You need to focus on your skills, and don't let anybody tell you that you can't do it. Just be yourself, and concentrate on your education, because it is very valuable and no one can take it from you. Keep learning no matter how old you are! It begins with you having a positive attitude. Don't be ashamed to ask for help, and always have a yearning for learning!"

Students Making a Difference Through Holistic Professions

Carolyn Crowe

Carolyn Crowe lives in Montgomery, Alabama, where she is a Case Manager and Employment Specialist at the Janice Capilouto Center for the Deaf. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the State Independent Living Council and works as a mentor in the Christian Women's Job Corp. A former client of the Janice Capilouto Center for the Deaf, she realized that providing case management services, support services, job readiness training, and job placement for individuals who are deaf is what she wanted to do for a living. She is also working on her certificate in Community Employment Services and is planning on studying for her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

"I'd like a doctorate eventually," she says. "I'm beginning to see a need for day care reform and possible earlier intervention for children with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) prior to elementary school." Carolyn would also like to see American Sign Language offered as a second language to more students in the school systems. She has many interests in the area of deaf advocacy and hopes to help bridge the gap between the hearing and deaf worlds through education and seminars. Also, she shares, "we need tax credits for the deaf like those the blind receive."

Carolyn, who has had a progressive, nerve-related hearing loss for the past eight years, received her Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts from **Auburn University at Montgomery**. During her years in school, she was both a full-time and part-time student. "I had studied so many different things," she explains, "not actually knowing what to do with my life." The degree she received in Liberal Arts, though, proved to be a course of study she enjoyed. "It is a well-rounded degree for people with varied interests."

While in school, Carolyn juggled not only her classes, but she also worked full-time and took care of her family. She enjoyed school and found the Center for Special Services very accommodating. "My professors helped me," she adds, "whenever I needed extra accommodations. My advisor was understanding of my situation and worked my classes around professors he knew I could understand."

She briefly attended **The University of West Alabama at Livingston** in the late 1970s

Today's
Classifieds

"Nothing is free. Hard work and persistence are the ultimate payoff."

and early '80s as well, and while there she was on the Dean's List. She is also proud of the fact that while she was a client and a student at Auburn, she was asked to be a guest speaker at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Center for the Deaf where she now works. She is dedicated and diligent, because, she says, "nothing is free. Hard work and persistence are the ultimate pay offs."

Carolyn describes herself as someone who lived in the hearing world but who is now crossing over to the Deaf Culture. "I know both worlds are unique, and I can relate to both," she explains. "Quality of life is a major concern for me. I don't want to see discrimination just because of a lack of hearing. I'd like for hearing people to step out into the deaf world and not be afraid of it." She also explains that it is important for people to be sensitive to the needs of those with a hearing loss by speaking slowly and face to face and by not becoming frustrated or angry if they have to repeat something said.

Carolyn prefers using an FM System and describes it as her "best friend." She adds, "I don't feel like I'm missing anything when I use it."

Carolyn Crowe believes that high school deaf students ready to embark on a postsecondary education or the world of work should remember that nothing is impossible if you strive for your goal. She also believes it is important to remain open-minded in order to continue growing as a person. "In everything you do, do it right."

Lisa Harris

Lisa Harris believes it is important for high school deaf and hard of hearing students to surround themselves with positive people. "Whether you realize it or not," she says, "the decisions you make in life will be severely impacted by the company that you keep. Also, remember that the only thing that stands in front of you and success is an excuse, and if you think you can't, you won't. Know that your disability is a perception; we are all ultimately different, and learning to be comfortable with yourself is a powerful tool. Remember to believe in yourself, and others are sure to follow."

Lisa is from Brooklyn, New York. She experienced a slow and progressive hearing loss that started at age fifteen due to a severe infection from the common cold, although hearing loss is also hereditary in her family.

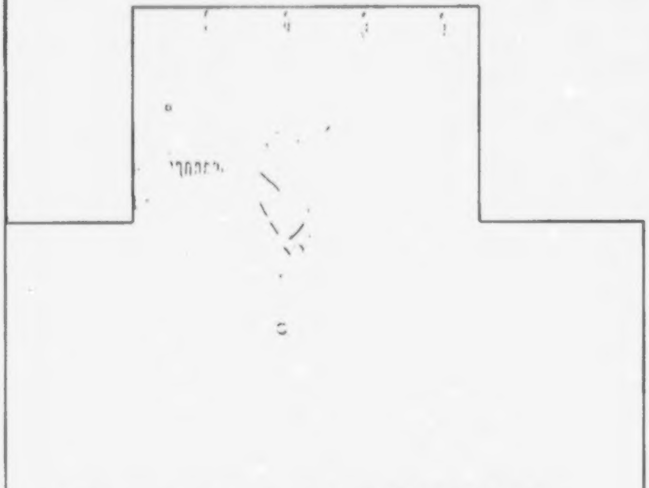
She is currently employed at Quest Diagnostics as a Data Entry Typist and has been there for four years. Before moving to Atlanta, Lisa researched a good place to work, and Quest Diagnostics (formerly SmithKline Beecham Clinical Labs) seemed to her like a good place to be.

After moving to Atlanta in 1992, Lisa was fitted with hearing aids. Almost fifteen years and two children later, she decided to attend **Georgia Perimeter College.** "I was very apprehensive about school because of my hearing loss, and I didn't think I could do the work," she says. Thanks to her advisor, Mavis Clarke, at the Disabilities Center at school, Lisa began to relax and realize that there were other students like herself there. Lisa started as a part-time student, uncertain of a program of study. Since she explored different classes, switched majors, and had a family to raise, she felt as if she had taken longer than necessary in her first years of school. However, finally on track, she decided to major in Psychology and will be getting her Associate of Science degree the Summer of 2001.

"After attending my first, few remedial classes, I realized my studying paid off and that I was just as smart as the hearing students," she says. During her third remedial class, Lisa received a "Student of the Quarter" award. Later in an English class, Lisa wrote a paper on mandatory testing for women with HIV that was later entered into a school publication, *The Polishing Cloth*, to honor students with good writing skills.

Lisa likes to spend quality time with her two daughters who are both hearing. She is an avid reader and also enjoys weekend trips away from home with her fiancé in order to get away from the daily stress created by her busy schedule. Lisa loves flowers and fish tanks and hopes to someday have a miniature greenhouse in her back yard and learn more about exotic fish.

Lisa's goal is to pursue a Master's degree in Psychology. She would like to be a professional counselor and teach in her spare time. Having already been accepted to **Georgia State University**, she plans to attend in the Fall of 2001 to complete her Bachelor's degree.



"Know that your disability is a perception; we are all ultimately different, and learning to be comfortable with yourself is a powerful tool."

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Jon Hepner

Jon Hepner is currently a graduate student at **East Tennessee State University** and at the end of his first year of studying for his Master's in Physical Therapy. "Graduate school is great," he says. "I have probably learned as much in one year here than I did in my last two years in undergraduate school. It is much more intense."

Jon, deaf since birth, received a mostly mainstreamed education while growing up. "From kindergarten to fourth grade," he says, "I spent half the day in a resource classroom in Moorestown, New Jersey, with approximately eight other deaf students and two teachers that signed. In the afternoon, I was mainstreamed with a hearing class for basic classes, such as Math, English, and P.E. In the fifth grade, I was fully mainstreamed with full-time interpreters all day in school. From the sixth grade to high school, when we lived in Atlanta, I was also fully mainstreamed with full-time interpreters for normal and advanced classes."

Jon received his undergraduate education at **The University of Tennessee** in Knoxville from 1993 to 1997 and received a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science. "I chose to study Exercise Science as an undergraduate because of my strong interest in medicine and sports," Jon says. "I thought I would combine the two." He made the Dean's List for four semesters and graduated with a 3.3 GPA. While a student, he also worked as a student athletic trainer for the UT Men's Athletic Department. "I chose UT," he explains, "for many reasons—the strength of Disability Services, the interpreting services that office provides, the awareness of deafness in the community, its proximity to my home in Atlanta, the Exercise Science program, the deaf population in Knoxville, and the fact that the University is close to the Tennessee School for the Deaf."

When Jon is able to find free time, he enjoys working out, running, biking, and physical activities in general. "I hope to graduate from Physical Therapy school," he says, "and work in acute care with patients who have had strokes, heart attacks, neurological pathologies, and paralysis. In the future, I would like to open a Wellness Center, incorporating all kinds of sports and medicine, such as weight training, aerobics, physical therapy, medical services, massage therapy, and more. I hope to have the option of moving to a location where it is warm and there is a strong deaf community so that I can then become more involved with the deaf and community activities."

"Be sure of yourself, and be sure you want to go to college."

Speaking to younger deaf and hard of hearing students considering a postsecondary education, Jon shares: "My advice to ya'll? First of all, you need to be sure of yourself, and be sure you want to go to college. Take your time making a decision about where you want to go and what you want to major in. Make sure it is really what you want to do. Also, make sure that the school you attend has a good support team or disability services to assist you with interpreting, notetaking, and so forth. If they have it, use it. Follow your dreams and your heart, and hang in there!"

Victor L. Kelsey

Victor L. Kelsey receives comfort from repeating the words of his late father: "There is no unimportant task to be done, just as there are no unimportant people to do those tasks."

Victor has been deaf since birth. He completed his elementary education in the public school systems in New York and Virginia after a brief stay at a regional school for the deaf in New York. At West Point High School in West Point, Virginia, Victor was an active member of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and a member of the Key Club for one year; he played football, track, and soccer (lettering in all three sports) and was a volunteer coach for one year in football and soccer.

Victor received a postsecondary education at **New River Community College** (NRCC) from 1984 to 1989 where he received an A.A.S. in Business Management; **Ferrum College** from 1989 to 1991 where he received a B.S. in Business Administration: Administrated Services; and, **Roanoke Bible College** from 1996 to 1999 where he received a B.A. in Bible Studies, having minored in Preaching. Currently, he is studying for his MAPM in Family Life Studies at **Cincinnati Bible College and Seminary**.

"There is no unimportant task to be done, just as there are no unimportant people to do those tasks."

"I was a full-time student at each school," Victor says. "At NRCC and Ferrum, I followed in my father's footsteps. I wanted to own my own business in the future. However, I found that the business world was different than what my father taught me, so I decided to look elsewhere."

Victor explains his decision to enter Bible college. "I felt the Lord calling me into the ministry. I was also encouraged by my friends, and an old friend came calling for my assistance as well. In her deepest need at a church camp where she had known both ministers since childhood, she turned to me for comfort and prayer. God can be very powerful. Now I am using my talent and skills to reach the deaf for Christ while I work full-time and attend graduate school."

Victor is proud of his achievements in both school and church. He served as the Student Government Senator, Secretary, and President; Co-founder of the Computer Club; Sign Language Club member and Vice-President; Deaf Awareness Chairman for two years; and, member of the softball team for two years. He also served as the Assistant Sunday School teacher for college-age youth at his church; a teacher for Sunday night classes for fourth to sixth graders; a Youth Sponsor for twelve years; and, a substitute preacher for two and a half years as he completed his degree.

Victor appreciates the support he received at NRCC. "Their emotional and academic support was outstanding," he says. "My weak spot was notetaking. But, the school's notetaking service allowed me to attend to the discussion in the classroom."

Currently, Victor works as a Medical Transport Driver, Preacher, and missions representative to Wesley Community Services, Christ Church of the Deaf, and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Institute for Christian Education—all in Cincinnati. He is active as a representative for missions groups and as a volunteer for church camps. "I travel for missions to churches," he explains. "I am in the people business, so technology has little to do with my job." Victor, however, is grateful for new digital hearing aids, captioning, and his TTY.

"In the future, I plan to work in the church as a minister of the deaf and in the family ministry. I'd like to write material that can be used by others to teach deaf families to better understand how to work as a family. That would include discussions of stress management, communication skills, listening skills, and problem solving. My overall goal is to give back to the deaf community, because they have given me some inspiring people to look up to, such as Cecil Prilliman, Lucy Howlett, Gary Olsen, Ben Show, and Bob Biggs. All these people either are deaf or have people in their family who are deaf, and they've given and continue to give of themselves. Most of all, I want to lead as many deaf people to the Lord as I can. This is the greatest gift I can give to my deaf friends."

"You are important," Victor tells high school deaf students, "and with determination, hard work, and being led by God, anything is possible." Victor concludes his advice with a Bible verse, Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ, because He gives me strength."

Tim King

Tim King found out he was hard of hearing in 1973 from a hearing evaluation in the first grade conducted at the elementary school he attended. "It is a day that is quite vivid in my memory, an unfortunate memory, but not because of my hearing," Tim explains.

The students in his class had mastered the task of lining up in orderly elementary school fashion. Tim was positive they were all on their way to the buses for a field trip or a visit to the playground. Little did he know that they were headed to the principal's office for a brief hearing evaluation. "I, like my classmates, stood in line patiently and wondered what in the heck was going on," he says.

As the line inched forward, Tim discovered that what was happening was in an office near the principal's domain. He watched as some of his classmates entered the mysterious room, but none of them returned. Tim thought nothing of it at the time, and he actually looked forward to his opportunity to enter the unknown.

"[My parents] let me cry, but they did not let me quit."

"My fateful turn came quickly," Tim says. "I was ushered into the office where a nice, young lady sat behind a desk and wore a friendly smile. Four of my classmates sat on a couch that faced my left side. The nice lady said she was going to give me a hearing test, and when I heard a 'beep,' I was to wave to my classmates on the couch. The test sounded simple enough."

It seemed like an eternity, though, before Tim heard that first beep. He waved to his classmates on the couch excitedly. He heard another beep and waved even harder. He thought it was fun, and—apparently—his classmates did as well. They were laughing hysterically and uncontrollably with him, "or at least I thought they were," he says.

His exam ended abruptly. He turned to face the nice lady with the friendly smile, and it was at that point, he believes, that his life changed forever. "The nice lady with the smile was no longer smiling; she looked stern and concerned. My classmates stopped giggling, and—as far as I could tell—they were looking at me. The first words from the formerly nice lady with a smile were, 'You have a hearing problem, and you need hearing aids and ear plugs.' It was as simple as that," Tim shares.

"Those words live on in my mind, replaying repeatedly throughout my life. I was devastated, to say the least. What I thought was a game turned into the most traumatic event of my life, and all I could do was cry for mama. It is a terrible feeling . . . Trauma is unforgettable when one experiences it without one's mama."

There Tim was as a seven year old—all by himself with a "hearing problem," surrounded by strangers. "I continued to cry without interruption until my mama arrived. Her soothing touch eased my pain then and for years to come as I tried to come to grips with being a person with a disability."

Tim says that from that point forward his educational experiences were nothing special. He was an average to below average student, he explains, in most areas. "There were times when I cried home to mama, because someone made fun of my hearing aids. I had a very low self-esteem and thought I was stupid because of my disability." Tim, though, was very good at sports, and that outlet kept him from completely giving up. He also had a few, close friends that enjoyed his company regardless of how many times they had to repeat a whispered secret so no one else would hear. He had very supportive parents as well that refused to treat him any differently than their other children. "They let me cry, but they did not let me quit," he says.

In high school, Tim decided he was old enough to go without hearing aids, "as if I could outgrow my disability," he explains. "I paid a heavy price for taking that course, because I missed more information than most of my friends." His parents and the supportive faculty at Montgomery Catholic High School did not challenge this decision. "They had seen me struggle with accepting myself for so long that quite possibly they felt compelled to let me make a mistake."

He struggled through high school but did fairly well in athletics. He also had a few, good friends to "hang out with and cruise the strip!" His self-esteem, however, was still low. Tim believes that this was not a result of adolescence but rather his perception of what it meant to be a person with a disability. Tim graduated but as a very low second-quartile graduate.

"I was accepted by a local college based on where I went to high school and not for my grades nor my ACT scores," he explains. He played baseball and made it through the year with average grades. He remained steadfast in his refusal to wear hearing aids. "I did not acknowledge my disability to anyone or myself," he adds. He transferred to a smaller college in his second year and gave up organized sports altogether. "It was a blessing in disguise for me, because I excelled academically at the smaller college, although I still refused to wear hearing aids."

After completing his baccalaureate degree, he made the decision to eventually pursue a Ph.D. "I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it, but I knew deep down that I would have to come to terms with my disability at some point. I excelled at the undergraduate level only because I went beyond what an 'average' student would do to succeed."

Tim explains that the most influential person in his young adult life was his future spouse, Beth. "She convinced me that it was okay to be a person with a disability, and she gave me an impetus to seek assistance. At the time, I told her I would seek a hearing evaluation, but only for her, not for me."

Ten years after he decided to stop wearing hearing aids, Tim received what he describes as the best hearing aid evaluation of his life from Dr. Pat Klienzle at Auburn University at Montgomery. "Dr. Pat was warm, receptive, and attentive. She took time with me; the way she conducted herself made me feel important. For the first time in my life, since I found out I had a 'hearing problem,' I made a step toward accepting myself as a person with a disability." Dr. Pat was instrumental in introducing Tim to Jim Owens, his first rehabilitation counselor contact. "Jim took a chance with me and provided me with hearing aids. From that point forward my experiences with vocational rehabilitation flourished."

As Tim was coming to terms with himself as a person with a disability, he was still determined to pursue a Ph.D. "Because I still struggled with my self-esteem and confidence, I did not know where to start." He was put in touch with Rachel Beasley Hughes, who at the time was a counselor at the Janice Capiluto Center for the Deaf in Montgomery, Alabama. Rachel assisted Tim with formulating a plan of action to pursue his Ph.D. "I had to have some experience first, and Rachel was instrumental in setting off a chain of events that led me to where I am today," he explains.

He received a job at East Alabama Mental Health in Opelika, Alabama, "because of Rachel," Tim adds. "I took off afterwards. I enrolled at **Troy State University-Phenix City** and completed a Master's degree in Counseling and Human Development. I wore my hearing aids with pride, and it was quite strange, because I no longer felt like an outcast. I felt more confidence than ever."

Dr. Andrew Cox and his dearest friend, Dr. Dianne Gossett, were instrumental with Tim's development as a counselor. Both encouraged him to pursue a Ph.D., and—with their support—he entered **The University of Alabama** (UA) in the summer of 1994 to begin doctoral studies in Counselor Education.

"I wasted no time scheduling an appointment with the UA Speech and Hearing Center where I continue to go for hearing evaluations," Tim explains. "Dr. Becca Brooks and Dr. Carmen Taylor are simply fantastic." The Speech and Hearing Center also put him in touch with Jamie Glass, a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the deaf and hard of hearing. Like Jim Owens, Jamie took a chance with Tim. "I was the first doctoral student he had worked with, and he indeed did me much justice. Jamie acquired new hearing aids for me, and they are a godsend."

Tim then began an assistantship with Student Support Services at the University. That experience led him to a full-time position as Manager of Physical and Psychiatric Disability Services with The University of Alabama in 1997. In 1999, he was given an opportunity to join The University of Alabama at Birmingham as Director of Disability Support Services where he remains today.

"If you are deaf or hard of hearing, give yourself an opportunity to succeed. Take advantage of services available to you, and do your best to make the most of it," Tim says. He believes that students in high school who are deaf and hard of hearing should find an institution where they feel most comfortable. "Visit, visit, visit! Ask appropriate officials about services for students who are deaf/hard of hearing. Make sure you investigate as many aspects of an institution as you can," Tim suggests. For instance, he explains, find out if tutoring is available, ask about what degree programs are offered, look into living arrangements and financial aid, etc.

Tim believes that with the advent of assistive technology, the market for persons with disabilities has improved. Today, he states, individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing have unlimited possibilities in the technology industry. Also, when asked about technology in the classroom, he says, "I believe that C-print™ and realtime captioning are the wave of the future for higher education. Students who use ASL or another form of transliteration should become very familiar with written English in order to succeed at the postsecondary level." Higher education, Tim believes, measures one's ability to demonstrate mastery of English in nearly every academic course. C-print™ and realtime, he says, offer needed exposure to linguistic styles with spoken English. "All of us who are deaf/hard of hearing should use these formats regardless of one's educational goals."

In Tim's office, he uses an amplifier for his phone, but he prefers e-mail or visiting with a student, staff, or faculty member in person. Phone communications are difficult, he says, even with an amplifier. "Thank goodness for e-mail," he adds.

Tim is still pursuing his goal of a Ph.D. and is almost there. "My free time is spent with my wonderful wife, Beth, and my two boys, Alex and Davis. With their support, I am working harder than ever to complete my dissertation. Who knows, maybe next year folks will refer to me as Dr. Tim King. I cannot wait!"

Tim is very grateful to the many folks who have helped him on his journey. "Without the assistance of VRS and timely interventions from friends and family," he says, "I would not be here."

He further adds, "Without a commitment from persons dedicated to the Postsecondary Education Consortium (PEC), we may never know how many Dr. Tim Kings are out there. Please keep up the good work. Each of you has value. Believe me when I say we all appreciate PEC without question, hesitation, or reservation."

Michael McKee

"I love this quote from John Locke," shares Michael McKee, "since it epitomizes what I believe in life: 'The best defense against this world is a thorough knowledge of it.'"

Michael, who is twenty-four years old and profoundly deaf, is well on his way towards a thorough knowledge of many things. He is a fourth year medical student at **The University of Florida College of Medicine**. By telling PEC a little bit about himself, he hopes to be able to help others growing up in the same situation as his.

At a young age, his family knew something was wrong, since he never learned speech. Unfortunately, the physicians and audiologists he and his family consulted did not diagnose him with profound deafness. To the dismay and shock of his parents, many of them gave him an even worse diagnosis of mental retardation, language aphasias, and other severe neurological impairments. It wasn't until his parents returned yet again to another audiologist to get his ears checked that they learned of his very profound bilateral sensorineural deafness. "The audiologist reported the news to my parents," Michael says, "and they were elated to finally find the cause. The true cause of my deafness is unknown, although many theories exist. My hearing loss was found to be in the 90 dB range across all frequencies in both ears."

Soon after the diagnosis of deafness at almost age three, Michael was fitted with hearing aids and started speech therapy. "At that time," he explains, "there existed a very strained relationship between the deaf community who supported American Sign Language and the oral therapists who espoused oral communication for the deaf child. My parents were hungry for information from both sides, but they had great difficulty obtaining information and finding members from the deaf community. Since we live in a predominantly hearing world where English is spoken, my parents chose the oral method for me."

"Take advantage of the technology and accommodations that are available to succeed in every aspect of life."

With the devotion of his speech therapist and his mother, Michael learned how to talk, lipread, write, and read at age three. "For those of you out there with deaf hyperactive children, there is hope," he shares. "Keep in mind that if your child is deaf, his or her hyperactivity might stem from a frustration of not being able to communicate easily with others." At around age five, Michael started calming down from his own bouts of hyperactivity, since his communication skills improved dramatically. "It allowed me to get out of the shell that I had previously lived in," he adds.

"Today both sides supporting either sign or oral communication have come closer to agreeing to allow the best decision to be made for the deaf child," Michael explains. "Many people have asked me what I would have done. I am still thankful that my parents decided on the oral communication route, since it allowed me to interact with the hearing world without difficulty. However, I sincerely believe that the method of communication and education should be decided on an individual basis for each deaf child. A child can succeed today with either the oral communication route or the American Sign Language route. What is absolutely crucial is the parental involvement in the child's education. There is no substitute for that, especially in the child's early formative years."

In addition to allowing future parents of deaf children to have all the information that they need to make the best decision for their child, Michael believes that deaf people need to make themselves more accessible to children who are deaf and their parents. "I try to be accessible to them to give them advice and to answer their many questions," he says. "Even more important is the role of education for deaf people. I sincerely believe that education at the highest level is essential for each and every deaf person to be able to succeed in life. Let me also add that education is not solely the responsibility of others, but it is the responsibility of the deaf student himself or herself. I believe in being curious about my surroundings and learning more about them through hands-on experience, library reading, web surfing, and socializing with interesting people."

Michael's interests are quite varied, but he enjoys all sports (especially basketball), hiking/canoeing, gardening, weight lifting, and reading/writing. These hobbies add balance to his life and provide a much-needed reprieve from the rigors of medical school.

Michael attended **Lynn University** on an academic scholarship and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. He also attended **Florida Atlantic University** to study Chemistry. "At this time," he says, "it was difficult for me to pinpoint a career that I wanted to pursue, due to my varied interests. I thought about pursuing a career in agronomy, veterinary medicine, hydrology, the teaching of history, and medicine. It wasn't until I got a chance to spend time with physicians in their medical offices that I finally decided to pursue a career in medicine." After quickly taking the MCAT and completing his application, he interviewed at his first choice of medical schools, The University of Florida College of Medicine, and was accepted there.

Currently, he is a fourth year medical student planning to become a family medicine physician. Next May, he will graduate with a medical degree and enter a residency program. "I hope to be able to incorporate many deaf families among my regular patients," he says. "Through the usage of American Sign Language, I hope to be able to improve patient/physician relationships and improve health awareness among deaf patients."

Michael grew up in a mainstreamed educational environment and depended on speechreading skills to communicate with others. However, at the late age of 18, he started learning American Sign Language from friends in the deaf community. "At this age," he says, "I had become curious about others with the same hearing impairment as me. I am proud to have many friends, both hearing and deaf. By having friends from varied backgrounds, it has allowed me to learn about and appreciate life. At the same time, my deaf friends have taught me and allowed me to become fluent in American Sign Language."

During his studies at The University of Florida, Michael has become very involved with the deaf community. This year he became president of the North Central Florida Association of the Deaf and also a board member of the North Central Florida Deaf Service Center. "I am excited to be able to be a part of the deaf community on a local and statewide level and to passionately fight for our deaf rights," Michael says.

In the last two years of medical school, Michael has requested interpreting services. "It is difficult to lipread in a clinical setting since many medical staff members and patients turn their faces away. They forget that I need to see their lips to lipread them," he shares. "This makes lipreading them impossible. By having an interpreter there with me, I feel like I have the ability to capture all of the information being conveyed, which is the primary goal of a deaf student. Prior to that, I relied on transcription note services and sitting in the front row to lipread the professor for all of my educational needs. However, interpreting services allow me to be greatly involved with discussions, which I really enjoy."

Since he is deaf, Michael explains, he has also accommodated himself with diagnostic tools in medicine. "I currently use a graphic auscultation system to 'listen' to the heart. This new device allows someone like myself to be able to interpret the heart sounds in a visual way. In addition, I use a very strong amplified stethoscope to listen to the lungs and abdomen."

Michael believes that deaf people are fortunate to have the boon of technology; never before, he says, have doors been opened this wide for individuals who are deaf. "The advent of e-mail, instant messaging, and telecommunication relay systems were a great blessing for me and many others from a communication standpoint. Since my hearing loss is too severe, I need to use the TTY and utilize alphanumeric pagers to accommodate myself with phone usage. Like many others, I am anxiously awaiting the day when we will be able to utilize palm held computers equipped with voice recognition systems so that I will be able to use the phone like any other hearing individual." Michael feels that all individuals who are deaf should take advantage of the technology and accommodations that are available to them to succeed in every aspect of life.

Tamara Payne

Tamara Payne graduated Summer 2000 from **Central Piedmont Community College** (CPCC) in Charlotte, North Carolina. She majored in Dance and hopes to one day have her own dance studio to provide a place for other disabled people to take classes in art, mime, dance, and sign language. Tamara feels lucky to have had the support of her family, her church, and school to help her realize her potential and teach her that she can succeed in anything she puts her mind to.

Tamara was born and raised in Charlotte. She was mainstreamed through public school using a sign language interpreter. She lives at home with her parents. Her mother and sister are fluent signers. Tamara participated in many activities during high school, which included three years as a cheerleader and an active membership in the DECA Club. During her junior year, she was recognized in a magazine about deaf children in America.

Tamara started classes at CPCC in 1995. At first, she was undecided as to what she wanted to study. After some classes in College Transfer and Fashion Merchandising, she finally found her niche in Dance. "This curriculum," she says, "has satisfied my love of the arts. It also goes hand in hand with my other interests." At the age of fifteen, she joined a church mime group, "The Silent Message," and later led the group. For six years she was a member of a youth missionary group that went to New York during Spring Break to present their message through mime to children and homeless people in the Battery. She has traveled to countries such as England and Croatia to do mission work. Tamara has also participated in the leadership training provided by PEC, the Postsecondary Education Consortium.

Tamara has great plans for the future. She was married December 16, 2000, and she and her new husband are staying in Charlotte. She hopes to work for the King David Conservatory in order to prepare for opening her own studio for the fine and performing arts.

"No matter what their disability," Tamara says, "everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential. If people want to try something, they should do it and never think, 'I can't!'"

"No matter what their disability everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential."

Joseph J. Ryan

Joseph J. Ryan ("everyone calls me JJ"), originally from Memphis, Tennessee, is currently a graduate student in Community Counseling at **Gallaudet University**. As an undergraduate student at **The University of Tennessee**, JJ majored in psychology. "My step dad is a psychologist," JJ says, "and he influenced me a lot with his stories and his work with youth. It fascinated me, and I was encouraged to explore that field."

As a student at UT, JJ joined a fraternity and served as the Assistant Pledge Trainer. "I played intramural football with them," he says. "I also served on the disability office committee." JJ's favorite activity while a student was attending the football games.

"The disability office at UT was awesome," JJ says. "They provided great support, and I could go there anytime just to hang or talk with anyone. The interpreters were very professional and helpful, too. I liked the fact that the services the office provided were easily accessible. I'm grateful to the disability office for what they did for me as an undergraduate."

JJ was born deaf and received an oral education while growing up. "I went to St. Joseph's Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis from grade one to eight," he explains. "It was an oral deaf private boarding school. I was then mainstreamed at a private high school in Memphis." It was not until he arrived at The University of Tennessee that he learned American Sign Language from his deaf friends.

JJ had a life-long dream of attending The University of Tennessee. "Once I got there," he shares, "the reason for going there got better! I learned a lot about myself and got to meet many deaf individuals who are now my life-long friends. If not for them, I would not have learned sign language or Deaf Culture. Going to UT was the best thing I've done."

JJ also considers his decision to attend Gallaudet for his Master's degree a good one as well. "After graduation," he says, "I would like to work for a non-profit foundation or for the government."

"My advice to high school students is to pick the school where you feel most comfortable. Do as much as you can while you are there, because you only get to do it once in your life. The college years will always be memorable."

"Do as much as you can while you are [in college], because you only get to do it once in your life."

Zachary Shay

Zachary Shay is an accomplished artist. He graduated from high school in 2000 and currently lives with his mother, father, and two sisters in Douglasville, Georgia. Everyone in the Shay family uses sign language.

Any obstacles that Zachary may face now or in the future would seem like a breeze compared to the medical adversities he has had to overcome in the past. Despite his mother's happy and uneventful pregnancy, Zachary was born weighing only five pounds and had numerous defects. His parents and doctors were surprised to find that he was missing thumbs and radius bones in his arms, resulting in short arms and in hands that turned in on his body. On one side his ear was smaller, but more devastating were the defects inside his body. Although he had kidney problems, most life threatening were the three holes in his heart. The doctors told his parents that if he did not have heart surgery he would die. Physicians agreed to do immediate surgery. Zachary's family, however, is Jehovah's Witness and would not allow him to receive a blood transfusion. The doctors received a court order to give Zachary blood for surgery, believing that

"Be good, work hard, and don't give up on your goals."

surgery was impossible without a blood transfusion. His parents researched other ways to help Zachary, and they got permission to take him to Houston, Texas, where Dr. Denton Cooley had performed many successful surgeries on other patients without giving blood transfusions. Zachary, a very sick boy, was sent by Lear jet from Atlanta to Houston.

When Zachary arrived in Houston, he was examined by Dr. Cooley's team. When the family informed the team of doctors that they were told that Zachary would die without heart surgery, the doctors stated that with or without blood he would die in surgery at his size. He was simply too small, the doctors said. They adjusted his medicine and informed the family that he needed to grow more and then be brought back for the surgery.

But, a wonderful thing happened. As Zachary grew, the holes in his heart closed and can barely be detected today.

Due to his numerous medical problems, Zachary's family was unsure if he could hear. "My heart also had to work so hard that I had difficulty eating and breathing," Zachary says. Later, because he was so alert and inquisitive, he was diagnosed with only a moderate hearing loss, and he was given a hearing aid. In school he wore an auditory trainer. According to his elementary teacher, however, he was her only student who did not respond to the auditory trainer, and over the years it became apparent that Zachary was profoundly deaf. "I had the choice of going to the school for the deaf about an hour from my home," Zachary says. "My parents chose to keep me near home. They felt that Douglas County Schools had an excellent hearing impaired program." Zachary continued from elementary school to high school in the Douglas County School System and graduated in the year 2000.

Taking advantage of being able to continue his education in the **Douglas County Schools** until age twenty-one, Zachary is continuing to study art. His high school teacher suggested that Zachary go to school for half days to continue his art education. In high school, Zachary had taken all the art classes available and found himself very skilled in clay pottery and oil painting. He is now very accomplished, and his artwork is selling. "My art teacher, Mrs. Coward, is teaching me some things that are taught in college art classes," Zachary shares. He is also doing examples of art projects to help Mrs. Coward teach other students. When he turns twenty-one, however, Zachary will search for the right place to study art with other artists of his caliber. "I have a hard time getting my art work home from school without selling it first!" Zachary says.

Zachary, who also loves flowers and plants, would love to set up his own art studio and is seeking funds in order to do so. Zachary's teachers and friends constantly comment on his happy, positive attitude. He advises others "to be good, work hard, and don't give up on your goals!"

Zachary has brought joy to many lives. The person he is and his unique story have enhanced many lives.

Charlie Weir

Charlie Weir is a student at **Lenoir Rhyne College** (LRC), studying Sports Medicine/Athletic Training. "My first few majors were pharmacy, engineering, and business," he shares. "I didn't enjoy any of these majors. I went to see the career counselor, and she suggested I take the career assessment test, so I took it, and the test showed that my first option should be serving in the military, the second was a career in sports, and the third was a career in medicine. I looked at the combination of sports and medicine." Charlie took a few classes in this major and observed others work in the training room for a semester. "I fell in love with this major and could easily imagine myself working as an athletic trainer."

Charlie received the Moretz Student Athletic Trainer Award following his second year in the program, and in the Fall of 2000 he worked with the LRC football team. He is also very involved as a brother of Theta Xi fraternity, in H.A.N.D.S. (Hearing and Deaf Signers), and in intramurals.

Before transferring to LRC in 1996, Charlie attended **The University of Massachusetts-Amherst**. "I didn't feel comfortable," he shares, "attending such a big school and did not feel like I had a close relationship with any of the professors." He decided to transfer to a smaller school and had heard about LRC. After visiting for a weekend and talking to a few professors and several students, he felt very welcomed and made the decision to transfer. "Now," he says, "LRC is my second home. It has a great atmosphere, and I feel comfortable hanging out with either deaf or hearing friends."

Charlie is grateful for the staff in both Support Services for Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Students and the Sports Medicine Department. "The Support Services office provides full-time, comprehensive services, including interpreters, notetakers, tutors, or anything you could ask for. Also, they were available to interpret for me during my internship that required over 1,000 hours for a degree in Sports Medicine/Athletic Training. The staff in both departments has been behind me all the way."

Charlie also speaks highly of the types of technology that he uses most often. "I usually use e-mail," he says, "to communicate with professors. It seems to save a lot of time compared to trying to communicate over the phone. E-mail has helped break down some of the communication barriers that I used to have with hearing people." Also, in classes, Charlie describes, the school offers closed caption videos whenever possible. Professors also use Power Point presentations to help students understand complicated vocabulary and clarify their lectures. "And, within the major of Sports Medicine/Athletic Training, there is a lot of specialized equipment used when working with athletes, such as Ultrasound, electrical stimulation, and an Isokinetic dynamometer. Without technology, I would not be able to accomplish what I have set out to do."

As an athletic trainer, Charlie's responsibility is to apply his specialized knowledge and skills to provide service to athletes of all ages and abilities. He will also have to take the National Athletic Trainers Association Board of Certification exam. Charlie is enthusiastic about his field of study and even encourages others wanting to learn more about it to look at **www.lrc.edu** or **www.lrc.edu/hlss**.

Charlie also knows how to take a break from too much work and enjoy life. "I like doing many, different things and gaining more experiences in life," he says. "I have so many hobbies, such as fishing, camping, golfing, and swimming. And, I like to try different kinds of foreign beer once in a while!"

"I tell high school deaf students to follow their dreams," Charlie says. "If you do not know your dream, keep searching. Find a career that will make you happy and that you will enjoy for the rest of your life. Don't let any negative aspects stop you, and don't ever give up!"

Charlie's plans after graduation are to go to graduate school to earn a Master's degree and get a job he enjoys. "My dream is to work with a professional sports team in football, baseball, or any College Division I football team. I hope to have a family right after graduate school as well. In whatever direction God leads me, I'll go."

"Find a career that will make you happy and that you will enjoy for the rest of your life."

Students Making a Difference Through Children and Youth

> "Only you have the power to transform your shortcomings into motivation to succeed."

Rickie T. Bradley II

Rickie T. Bradley II attributes his success in life to two, main factors. "My motivation and interest are inspired by my Christian faith and my parents who taught me that God requires us to love and help one another. Helping others makes the world a better place."

Rickie lives in Boiling Springs, North Carolina, and has been hard of hearing since birth. All the schools he attended while growing up were North Carolina approved programs for the deaf and hard of hearing. He attended Cary Elementary School and Martin Middle School, a magnet school for gifted children in Raleigh, North Carolina. He graduated from Athens High School.

Currently, Rickie works as a Resident Advisor at **Gardner-Webb University** (GWU). "I help students with emotional and spiritual problems," he explains. "I solve disputes between roommates and enforce the school rules for the residents." He is also a full-time student at GWU, majoring in Biology with a double minor in Chemistry and Business Management. Rickie decided on a major in Biology while in high school. "Despite my hearing loss," he explains, "I've always been successful in science classes."

As a student at Gardner-Webb, Rickie has been involved in many extracurricular activities. He was a member of Gospel Choir and the President of his sophomore class. Before that, he was involved in Christian Ministries United and FOCUS, Fellowship of Christians United in Service. He was also involved in the Senate and received a Senate award.

Rickie chose Gardner-Webb because of their deaf program. "I'll always need effective notetakers and tutors to help me understand should I fail to comprehend what went on in the lecture," he says. Rickie commends GWU's successful program for deaf and hard of hearing students. "I also enjoy the small classes at GWU and the close relationship with professors."

Rickie is grateful for the technology available to him today. "The TTY aids me in talking to the deaf residents in other dorms," he says. "My doorbell lights help me recognize when I have a visitor, too. Of course, I am grateful for my hearing aids as well."

In his free time, Rickie is a member of Palmer Grove Baptist Church, and he holds Bible study on a weekly basis on campus. He ministers at his church as well. "My goal," he explains, "is to get licensed to minister some time this year after graduation." He speaks at local churches in addition to his own. He also adores Myrtle Beach and vacations there twice a year.

"I am also interested in health care," he states. "I'm going to graduate school to pursue a Master's degree in Public Health Administration. I would like to live and study here in Raleigh to continue to be close to my family and friends."

Eager to give advice to high school deaf and hard of hearing students, Rickie shares: "The only greatest obstacle you are facing is yourself. Only you have the power to transform your shortcomings into motivation to succeed. Never accept what others say about you, and rise above the things that are holding you back. Give everything your best shot. Then and only then will you find what truly makes you happy and successful."

Karmon Norris Cain

Karmon Norris Cain advises students who are deaf and hard of hearing to be sure to attend college for the right reasons. "Don't go to college for only social reasons. If you want to learn more and be serious about your future work, go for a postsecondary education."

Understanding the importance of following her own advice, Karmon pursued her postsecondary education at **Jacksonville State University** (JSU) in Jacksonville, Alabama, and majored in Computer Information Systems (CIS). "Because I learned that more and more computers will be needed in the future," Karmon says, "I decided to major in CIS with a minor in Mathematics, my favorite subject." As a student, Karmon received a Special Recognition Award in CIS and held several offices in the Student Organization for Deaf Awareness (SODA). She was also the recipient of SODA's Leadership Award for 1996-1997.

As a student who is deaf, she also took advantage of the services provided by Jacksonville State University—interpreters, notetakers, and tutors. She graduated in May 1997.

Currently, she works for the Georgia Department of Education as Secretary for the Georgia Parent Infant Network for Educational Services program. "Before I got this position," she shares, "I was a teacher's aide at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf for one and a half years."

Karmon enjoys her work. "I enjoy the mathematical logic that goes into processing monthly expense statements. I also really enjoy using the computer everyday for different purposes. Growing up, I always dreamed of working with children, and—sure enough—I now work for a program that focuses on young children with sensory impairments."

She is thankful for not only the technological advantages that the computer brings, but she also appreciates what e-mail, the TTY, hearing aids, and her ring flasher provide. All of this technology aids her in her daily life.

In November of 1999, Karmon married Michael Cain, another JSU alumnus. "We met in college," she says. "We recently got a house in Snellville, Georgia." She and her husband enjoy their new home and life in Snellville. "I enjoy going to church, e-mailing friends, playing sports, shopping, and outdoor activities."

"If you want to learn more and be serious about your future work, go for a postsecondary education.

Justin Cribb

"I'm very blessed to have a family that loves and supports me."

Justin Cribb describes himself as "cute and chubby, but I'm also very intelligent, dependable, and lots of fun to be with!" Justin grew up in Florence, South Carolina, and has one brother who is also hard of hearing. Both Justin and his brother have degenerative hearing losses. They are very close and enjoy riding horseback, camping, and fishing with their family. "All of my mother's family lives in the same county, and I enjoy spending time with them," Justin says. "My extended family is very important to me. I'm very blessed to have a family that loves and supports me," says Justin. His father is a minister, and Justin loves being called the "preacher's kid." He enjoys signing music for different churches and helping others learn sign language.

He attended Darlington County Schools, and—after visiting a mainstream program in Conway, South Carolina—he decided to transfer to the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind in his sophomore year. He was a member of the Beta Club and was Student Council Vice President. In his senior year, he was President of the Student Council and captain of the football team. "I was involved in many sports activities that I had never experienced before," he says.

After graduation, Justin attended **The University of South Carolina, Spartanburg** for one semester. He then became a student at **Spartanburg Technical College** (STC) in January, 1999. He chose STC because of the wonderful interpreting services, the strong deaf program, and the skilled instructors.

Growing up, Justin, his father, and his brother worked together building horse trailers, sheds, and additions to their house. He learned electrical skills from his dad and decided that was the career he wanted to pursue. He is majoring in Industrial Electronics and is looking forward to a career in this field. Justin has an innate ability in electronics and has a bright future ahead of him. "Electronics is a good major, because technology is the future," says Justin.

Justin works as a Residential Advisor at South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind with boys ranging from ages fifteen to seventeen. He is responsible for teaching independent living skills, helping them with homework, and planning afternoon activities. Justin will graduate in 2001.

Tamiko Cromwell

A graduate of **Spartanburg Technical College** (STC), Tamiko Cromwell majored in Automated Office. This major allows her to work closely with computers, which she enjoys. She graduated from James Island High School and attended **Trident Technical College** for a year. While talking with a deaf friend, Tamiko learned about the Cooperative Program for the Deaf and Blind in Spartanburg, South Carolina. She transferred to STC in 1996. In the future, she may continue her education by attending Cosmetology School.

Tamiko attributes her success in college to notetakers, tutors, and interpreters. "Tutoring helped me understand my courses. The interpreters were with me most of the day and suggested different learning techniques that helped me improve my grades. My interpreter, Melba Bishop, saw me listening to music with headphones. She suggested I try wearing an FM System during class. From that moment on, I wore it in all my classes. The support staff recorded materials on tape, and my grades improved dramatically. Who would think somebody hard of hearing could be an auditory learner?"

Tamiko is working as Residential Advisor at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind. She supervises students and assists them with homework and other duties. She is also an Outreach Specialist for PEC. She assists Nancy Lane in preparing for workshops and mailing materials. She gives presentations to PEC affiliates, educating them on issues related to deafness and how colleges can better serve deaf and hard of hearing students. She does an outstanding job and has been very beneficial to the faculty.

Tamiko was born prematurely, causing her to become hard of hearing. She weighed two pounds and one ounce at birth and stayed in the hospital for three months. Her mother told Tamiko that she could hold her in one hand when she was born. Even though she overcame her struggles at birth, she learned that in life you still have to struggle to get what you want.

In her free time, Tamiko enjoys vacationing with her family, cooking, and jewelry-making. She also styles hair for her friends and family. Tamiko was "Miss First Baptist" in her hometown in 1994. She participated in the Black History Programs and was a judge in the Miss Deaf Beauty Pageant while attending college. She won first place in STC's "Celebrate the Arts" for her poetry.

Tamiko encourages people to think for themselves. "College is not for everyone," she says, "but having goals will ensure success. If you decide to further your education, please be serious about it. College helps you learn a lot about yourself."

"College helps you learn a lot about yourself."

Phabian Dean

Phabian Dean is a six foot, four inch, 325-pound mountain of a man who works as a resident education parent at the Mississippi School for the Deaf. At age 24, he has the huge responsibility of caring for fifteen boys, ages ten through twelve, who seem to admire him greatly.

In 1976, Phabian was born in Jackson, Mississippi, at the University Medical Center. At six months old, his family noticed he was not responding to the music at church. After having several tests done, Phabian's mother found that he was deaf. At age one, he began school at the Magnolia Speech School for the Deaf. He attended school there until he was five and then began classes at the Mississippi School for the Deaf (MSD). Phabian attended MSD until he graduated from high school in 1996.

At MSD, Phabian was accustomed to making the honor roll. Some of his favorite classes were math, art, and English. However, he preferred and loved sports. He made All-American in football and basketball. He excelled in Track and Field, winning the "Best Field" plaque from his school.

"Bad decisions may ruin your goals, your reputation, and your life. Don't blow it!"

Phabian's talents carried over in college where he played football. He enrolled in **Hinds Community College** (HCC) in 1996 with printing as his major; however, he quickly realized that drafting would better suit him. "I loved college life," he says. "I made a lot of new friends and was well known for playing defensive end on the football field." The Hinds Community College Eagles won the State Championship for 1997-98. Phabian had articles written about him in the newspaper as well as special interviews for the Sports programs on television.

Phabian was very pleased that he made drafting his major at HCC. Although it was a real challenge at times, he enjoyed working on the computer. "I was very glad to be a student under teachers who were so knowledgeable and helpful," he says. He was also very appreciative of having skilled interpreters from the Disability Support Services in every class.

In Phabian's free time, he loves to ride horses, exercise, and travel. "As a Christian," he says, "I love to converse about God and His goodness. I also love to talk to older, more mature people, but—at the same time—I enjoy talking to the fifteen young, deaf children I tend to every day. I enjoy teaching them the skills they need to succeed in life, such as the importance of good behavior, how to budget their money, what to look for in a good friend, and how to be responsible."

When thinking about his own future, Phabian wants to marry someone with a good personality and someone who will love God and will be a good mother. He wants to have at least two children, live in the country, and have lots of horses." I don't care about riches; I'm not really material minded. I'd rather focus on having a good home than focus on wealth," he says.

To all students now attending college, he offers this wisdom: "You now have your first decisions to make as responsible adults. You have no one to supervise your every move, so make good decisions and good choices for your future. You hurt only yourself if you don't. Also, bad decisions may ruin your goals, your reputation, and your life. Don't blow it!"

Leslie J. Garcia

"Say not, 'I cannot' but 'I can!'"

Leslie J. Garcia was born hard of hearing. "When I was two years old," she says, "my parents realized that something was wrong when I didn't respond to someone talking behind me or to other sounds." Leslie's parents enrolled her in a private Catholic school, Villa Madonna in Tampa, Florida. "I thank God," she says, "for giving me the best teachers, the Salesian Sisters at Villa Madonna, because they were an important part of my life."

In second grade, Leslie began speech reading training, which is a skill that has benefited her through every stage of her life, she says. She graduated from Tampa Catholic High School and continued on to **Hillsborough Community College** in Tampa where she earned an A.S. (Associate of Science) degree in Business Management and Marketing. She presently works for the SunTrust Private Banking Group and has been in the field of banking and finance for ten years now.

Currently she is pursuing additional postsecondary studies in American Sign Language at Hillsborough Community College. "Returning to college after ten years wasn't easy," she shares. "I had a difficult experience in my first class of sign language. As always, accustomed to trying to listen to and lipread my instructors, I sat in front of the class, but this time it did not work! My teacher was deaf and did not use voice while teaching ASL. Even though there were interpreters in the back of the class voicing for the hearing students, I was unable to both listen to and watch them and watch the instructor at the same time. I was frustrated that my unique learning needs were ignored. I felt like a tennis ball, as my head bounced back and forth while I tried to lipread the interpreters in the back of the class and watch the instructor's sign language in the front of the class. This was the most upsetting feeling; I felt that I wasn't acknowledged in the 'Deaf World,' and eventually I dropped the class. If I had known then what I know now about requesting assistance for classroom accommodations with the office of services for students with disabilities that almost all colleges now have, I probably would have been able to get the instructor to work with me on possible solutions."

"Still," she adds, "I did not give up, because I believed in myself and in my dreams. I know that no matter how impossible things may seem at the moment, someday and somehow I will reach the goals that I have in view."

Leslie is now almost finished with her first course in Beginning Sign Language with a great teacher, Debbie, "who has been a blessing," she adds. Leslie does not intend to be a professional interpreter, but she would like to be available to help children who might need someone such as herself who knows what it is like to be in their shoes. "I want to make a difference in someone's life like my family, my husband, and my teachers have made in mine. My personal motto is: Say not, 'I cannot' but *'I can!'*"

Madalyn Powell

"I tell myself that there is nothing I can't do."

Madalyn Powell is a hard of hearing student at **Tulsa Community College**, beginning her second year towards her degree in Human Services. In August of 1999, she was diagnosed with a considerable hearing loss but has still maintained a 3.8 GPA. She also teaches at Hillcrest Child Development Center and has been teaching the two-year-old class sign language.

"I contribute a large portion of my success," she says, "to the Resource Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. They have provided me with an assistive listening device to use while in class, a cassette player, tapes, batteries, a notetaker binder with carbon paper, transcription for movies, and a tutor if needed. They also send letters to my instructors before the beginning of classes, informing them of my needs. Rondalyn Reynolds has been instrumental in putting me in contact with agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation where I qualified for the purchase of both of my hearing aids and Quota International of Tulsa who awarded me a $500 scholarship last year." Madalyn has been pleased to encounter understanding instructors who are willing to wear the assistive hearing device she needs to comprehend the material covered in her classes.

"Since my involvement with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Center," she shares, "I have a better understanding about those with a hearing loss."

Madalyn understands the importance of finding humor in her disability. "In a class I am currently taking, the instructor left the room in order to give us the privacy needed to vote on issues of concern," she explains. "Once the instructor was in the hallway, he asked me to keep an eye on the class and make sure they did not take advantage of the situation. I began to laugh uncontrollably, but—of course—my classmates had no clue what I was laughing about. Now, for those of you who do not have a hearing loss, this may not be that funny, but I can honestly say that this was the first time in my life that I was sure I didn't miss some part of the conversation."

Madalyn will be transferring to **Oklahoma State University-Tulsa** in the Fall of 2001 to complete her Bachelor's degree in Human Services. "My advice to deaf and hard of hearing high school students is to be patient, and try to stay positive. I tell myself that there is nothing I can't do, and when I get frustrated and discouraged, I look to God and have the faith that He will guide the way."

Jennifer Christine Rogers

Jennifer Christine Rogers was born May 4, 1980, one month after the due date. "This," she says, "was soon recognized as the first mark of my personality—a strong-willed, unique individual who could never settle for less than what I was able to achieve." From the beginning, Jennifer explains, obstacles were a part of her life. "The first and significant obstacle that I faced and will face for the rest of my life occurred when I was one-and-a-half years old. I was diagnosed with a severe hearing loss. As a result, at the age of two I was sent to school to learn how to function in the 'hearing world.' At Sunset Acres Elementary School, I learned how to accept my deafness and my hearing aids as a part of myself. I knew that my deafness was not something to be resented and that the hearing aids were nothing to be ashamed of."

"I know that being different is a gift."

As Jennifer continued with school and with the support of her family and teachers, she learned the importance of knowledge. Reading and studying became an essential and integral part of her life. "In the early 1980s, closed captioning was not readily available to the public. Therefore, I did not watch much television. Now I do, but it is still reading!" Jennifer discovered that the more she read, the more she found herself enjoying reading and writing. "I found it easier to express myself through these mediums, because both the 'deaf world' and the 'hearing world' use the written word, a mutual form of communication," she says.

After kindergarten, she attended public school until she graduated from the Liberal Arts Magnet Program. In addition, she attended speech therapy from elementary school until her sophomore year in high school. "A natural introvert, I had to learn to become an extrovert," she shares, "someone who speaks out not only in the classroom but in life as well. I learned to ask questions, to respect others' opinions and my own, and to stand up for my beliefs and ideas. These aspects have taught me how to become a stronger person in the face of others' efforts to intimidate me because of their ignorance of my hearing impairment. Being deaf does not mean I am dumb!"

Jennifer's determination to succeed in the hearing world led her to improve herself intellectually. "I learned," she says, "that I thrive on knowledge and the exploration of new aspects of life. From an early age, I saw life's obstacles as adventures to overcome; however, not all had happy endings. The point is to survive, to learn, and to live. I did—through high school, with my family, and now in college."

During the summer of 1998, she was accepted to the Louisiana Scholars' College at **Northwestern State University**, an elite honors college. "Here I discovered a close relationship with my professors, a friendly and helpful staff, and terrific peers who accepted not only my hearing impairment but my entire self. Here I am not singled out as the 'Deaf Girl.'" As an award for her academic efforts after completing the Spring 2000 semester, Jennifer made the Dean's List.

"I have always known that I was different, and I have accepted that," she says. "However, I am not only different because of my hearing impairment but as a person. I was reared in a community that acknowledges differences as a part of an individual. Also, I was always encouraged to ask questions, because knowledge was considered important to the development of my identity. Part of human nature is to seek new things and discover one's limits. I realize that no one person has the same limits as another. That is something each individual has to learn for himself or herself."

Jennifer is a strong believer in herself and her ability to control her destiny through her actions and ideas. "I know that being different is a gift," she says. "Individuality and variety is what keeps the world interesting. I was raised to accept my differences as a part of who I am. It helps me develop an understanding of how far I can reach for a goal. I know that challenges are a part of life and that I am able to reach new ideas by meeting each obstacle with the knowledge that a lesson will be taught. It is my own decision to learn that lesson."

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Serving
Tennessee, the Virgin Islands, and West Virginia
The University of Tennessee
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The Postsecondary Education Consortium
http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/pec

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The PEPNet Resource Center
For listings of related resource materials visit:
http://www.pepnet.org
Click on Resource Center.

State Outreach and Technical Assistance Centers are located throughout the South to provide outreach, assistance and technical support to other postsecondary institutions or entities offering support services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. For more information contact the Statewide Outreach Coordinator at the center serving your state, or contact the PEC Central Office Staff for more information about the PEC.

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The Postsecondary Education Consortium (PEC) is one of four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Centers strive to create effective technical assistance for educational institutions providing access and accommodation to these students. Funded through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the PEC serves the southern region of the United States through eleven State Outreach and Technical Assistance Centers. For further information, for technical assistance with serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals, or for materials, please contact us at any of the State Centers, or at the PEC Central Office.

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